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MEMOIRS

OF

WILLIAM FORSTER.

EDITED BY

BENJAMIN SEEBOHM.

"Of all other things I love to be driven to the Saviour, and to have my need of Him brought home to my soul."

Letter from William Forster to Joseph Sturge, vol. ii., 128.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

As might be expected from such a character, William Forster left no records behind, designed to furnish materials for a biography of himself. And the simple object, in preparing these memoirs, has been "to gather up the fragments that remain" of a life worthy to be studied, and so to arrange and present them to the members of the Christian community to which he belonged, as to enable them to appreciate their value, and, through the Divine blessing, to profit by an example as rare as it was beautiful.

Luton, Bedfordshire, 1865.

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LIFE

OF

WILLIAM FORSTER.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE, CHILDHOOD, AND EARLY YOUTH.

William Forster was born at Tottenham, near London, on the 23rd of Third Month, 1784. He was the second of a family of eleven—four sons and seven daughters. His parents, William and Elizabeth Forster, were of good standing in the world, and highly esteemed members of the Society of Friends. His father, by profession a Land-Agent and Surveyor, was a man of great uprightness and Christian integrity, and of a large and intelligent mind;—his mother, a bright example of Christian humility, gentleness, and love. It was their uniform concern, as we learn from the family chronicle,* that their children might be impressed with a healthy feeling of reverence for sacred things, and a sincere love for the truths of the Bible. They sought

* A collection of family letters and papers, chiefly relating to the subject of this memoir, brought together with much labour, by his brother Josiah Forster, and largely made use of, as, to some extent, the basis of the present work.

carefully to shield their sons and daughters from all that might lead them to undervalue the blessed doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to train them, from very early life, in a due esteem for the principles and practices of their own religious community.

Having received a good education themselves, William and Elizabeth Forster were anxious that their children should possess the same advantage. There being good schools in the village, and other means of instruction through private tutors within reach, they were not sent from home. Great pains were taken, amidst their various studies, to render their early days happy by providing for them the allowable yet guarded pleasures and enjoyments of youth, under the eye of their most tender parents, who cared for them and watched over them with constant love,—yet without fostering in them the spirit of selfishness, or a disregard for the claims and feelings of others. By words of kindness, as well as by their own lively interest in the poor around them, and cheerful readiness to relieve their necessities, these pious parents sought early to awaken and to strengthen in the hearts of their children feelings of tender compassion and active benevolence towards the needy and the distressed, as one of the practical results of genuine piety towards God, and love to man.

Under such training, and with such home pursuits and enjoyments, coupled with the advantage of social intercourse among a circle of intelligent Friends, whose society was of an interesting as well as improving character, the early days of the subject

of this memoir passed away pleasantly, and he grew up a tall and slender youth. Somewhat shy, and of retreating manners, he was, nevertheless, a lively and playful boy—sometimes rather thoughtless and mischievous, as boys are wont to be. Though not particularly fond of learning, he was conscientious in his application to his studies, and made good proficiency in the usual branches of a liberal education. With increasing years his habits and conduct were uniformly circumspect; and he was remarkably kept within the bounds of moral rectitude. Kind and tender-hearted, he was affectionate towards his associates, and endeared himself especially to his parents, and his brothers and sisters. For his "beloved and honoured father," he cherished a warm affection; and to his mother his attachment amounted to little less than filial reverence. His loving heart keenly shared in the sorrows and distress of those who, from physical causes or through other trials and afflictions of life, were brought into suffering, a peculiar sensitiveness to human woe marking even his youthful days.

Notwithstanding his natural bashfulness, and the reluctance he felt to appear prominent, or to let his actions be observed, he delighted in deeds of kindness, hardly letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing. At this period of his life occurred the revolutionary troubles in France; and it was no uncommon thing, in those days, for Frenchmen of rank and station to be refugees in England, earning their bread by teaching. One of these had taken up his abode at Tottenham. He was a man of superior education who, from his

position in society, had been accustomed to the refinements and luxuries of life. He was engaged as French teacher to the young Forsters, and William became one of his attentive pupils. The following little incident, related by Priscilla Wakefield in a work published while residing in the neighbourhood, has reference to him when about thirteen years old, and beautifully illustrates the active kindness of his heart towards his foreign preceptor.

Whilst the teacher was in health, the scholar had often listened with great emotion to the affecting narrative related by his master, and many times had offered the tribute of an involuntary tear. When Monsieur failed in his usual attendance, he went to his lodging to enquire the cause of his absence; but how was he sensibly shocked, when upon being shown upstairs, he found him pale and emaciated, reclining in an elbow chair, his wife sitting on the other side of a few live embers, in the deepest dejection. The generous interest he had always taken in their misfortunes, presently induced them to unbosom their secrets to him; for, though he was young, he was their only friend. He frequently repeated his visits, and made himself fully acquainted with all their wants; he became the principal companion of their solitude, and renounced every amusement that he might devote his leisure hours to soothe their affliction. They were without firing to warm the chamber, and unable to procure that nourishment of which he stood in need. Medical advice was necessary, but they had no means of paying for it. He first made the circumstances known to his mother, and afterwards with artless simplicity to several other persons. Many administered to their necessities. He continued to cheer their solitary hours with his company, and mitigated their sufferings by numberless acts of tenderness and sympathy.

Thus early did William Forster begin to exhibit

some of those characteristics which gave such a peculiar interest to the whole course of his life; nor were acts of this kind by any means of rare occurrence; they might rather be said to form the habit of his youthful days. And—what is more—it soon became evident that all this was intimately connected with, if it did not wholly arise from, a deep and genuine work of grace in his heart. Unaccompanied by any marked crisis in his conscious experience, the transition from a state of unregenerate nature to one of real conversion to God, appears in his case to have been of a very gentle and almost imperceptible character, and to have had a very early commencement. Had he been asked, he would probably have been unable to point to any definite period as the first manifestation of spiritual life in his soul. It seemed to be coeval with the very days of his childhood; and many years after, when he had become a strong man in Christ, and an able minister of the Gospel, he has been heard to say in a meeting for Divine worship, and in his own peculiarly emphatic manner, that, "in looking back upon his earliest religious experience, he could not remember a time (and he thought he had not one of the worst of memories), when he was not sensible of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, showing him his natural corruption, convincing him of sin, and gently drawing him to the Saviour, that, through repentance and faith in the Son of God, he might receive forgiveness, obtain reconciliation and peace with his almighty and merciful Father in Heaven, and be enabled to walk in holiness before Him all the days of his life." Satisfactory evidence is,

indeed, not wanting that "God, who commanded the Light to shine out of darkness," had very early "shined in his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

It is not meant, however, to convey the idea that, at this time of life, he had attained to a complete view of all that appertains to the wondrous scheme of man's redemption by Christ. The religious experience of a youth, however genuine, does not often furnish much material suitable for permanent record; but as William Forster, even when a boy, was in the practice of occasionally keeping a little journal, and his early memoranda clearly shew that "the root of the matter" had already taken a deep hold on his mind, some notice of these may not be inappropriate, forming, as they do, an interesting comment upon the words of the Redeemer, when he rejoiced in spirit, and said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The privilege of waiting upon God, and of drawing near to Him in prayer, had already been largely experienced by the youthful believer, and was very precious to him. Between fourteen and fifteen, he makes the following entry in his note-book:—

1798. *11th mo. 18th. First-day.*—O my God, the prayer of my heart at this time is that thy hand may not spare, nor Thine eye pity, until Thou hast made me what Thou wouldst have me to be. Curb, I pray Thee, my rambling thoughts, when gathered from the world and the cares thereof, to sit

down in solemn silence as at thy footstool. Grant me, O Lord, I beseech Thee, faith to believe in thy sufficiency for every good thing, and my insufficiency for the same; and to believe in the redemption, from sin unto salvation, through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, whom Thou made a little lower than the angels; and sent Him into the world to be crucified for poor fallen man.

The world was at that time in a state of great confusion and excitement. The bloody wars of the French revolution had long raged on the Continent. The fearful conflict at Vinegar Hill had only just led to the termination of the social disturbances connected with the Rebellion in Ireland. A few months only had elapsed since Nelson's achievements at the celebrated battle of the Nile had won for him a peerage, and had encouraged the European powers to a new coalition against France; and now again large armies were preparing to take the field and to engage in the fatal strife.

Continually hearing of wars and rumours of wars, and anxiously observant of events, our young friend, who had already given in his adhesion to the Prince of Peace, could not remain insensible to the afflictions which abounded at home and abroad. In connexion with these things he makes the following record:—

11th mo. 20th.—Most glorious Father! if I may but call Thee so, renew, if it be thy ever-blessed will, my faith in Thee and in thy ever-blessed Son, Jesus Christ! And the prayer of my heart at this time is that righteousness might cover the earth, even as the waters cover the sea. O! blessed would be the day. Then, indeed, nation would no more rise up in war against nation, nor would the people learn war any more, which at this day is too sorrowfully the case. O! the many

thousands that have been slain, ah, and the tens of thousands, within these ten years, on the continent of Europe. O Lord, the prayer of my heart is, whilst I am writing, that if it be thy blessed will, in thy own time, which is the best time, and must be waited for before we can do anything aright, that Thou will extirpate wars from the land of the living.

Two days later a few simple, artless words give us, by way of anticipation, a little perspective of that largeness of heart—that catholicity of spirit, in which in after-times he so often delighted to speak of the kindness, the perpetuity, and universality of the love of God in Christ Jesus, extending "from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth."

11th mo. 22nd.—O! saith my ungrateful soul, how good would it be for me if I could utter in sincerity from my heart, as the royal Psalmist did formerly, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Blessed be the name of the Lord; for I can truly say that He hath ever been a tender Father unto me (I am in my fifteenth year), warning me before I entered upon the temptation, and gently reproving me afterwards. It is under a renewed sense of his abundant loving-kindness to me at this time, that I have been engaged to write in this manner. Blessed and praised be his holy name by all the families of the earth, Christians, Mahometans, Pagans, and Deists; for his mercies have extended to all of them.

It is interesting to see the *boy* thus foreshadow so much of what became so conspicuous in the *man*. There is ground to believe that even at this early period of life the prospect of being called to devote himself wholly to the service of God in the Gospel of his dear Son, had already opened to his view. It was probably with reference to this that he penned the following:—

1798. *12th mo. 9th.*—I must be brought down; I must be laid low; I must be cleansed, purified and sanctified, before I shall be a fit vessel, duly dedicated to the Lord my God; and I have a secret hope that the day is not very far off; O most merciful Redeemer, grant that it be not!

10th.—I think at this time that, had I my choice, I had rather be the meanest and poorest instrument in the Lord's house, than a king amongst wicked people.

11th.—There were some few things that seemed required of me to do; and, as I did them, so did I feel the reward of peace to arise in my mind. The Lord our God is a God of mercy; my faith still continues very weak.

12th.—As I have turned my face unto the Lord, He has been graciously pleased to turn to me; blessed and praised be his high and holy name for ever.

About that time, an unusually large number of Friends from America were on a religious visit in England, in the service of the Gospel. One of them was Thomas Scattergood, from Philadelphia, of whom an interesting Memoir has been published. William Forster had been much benefited by his ministry, and was closely attached to him. After attending a meeting at which he was present, he remarks :—

12th mo. 13th.—Thomas Scattergood at meeting had something to express against an atheistical and deistical spirit, which he believed was prevalent in the minds of too many. O that I may be kept from such a spirit! Most merciful Creator, increase, I pray Thee, my faith in Thee, and thy blessed Son, our Redeemer.

A few more extracts from his diary bring us to his fifteenth birthday.

12th mo. 14th.—O what peace have I felt in giving up to little pointings of duty—and the contrary. When the Holy Spirit clearly shows us some little things which may appear to

us of no consequence, and we do them not, how does it anger the Holy God!

15th.—I have sinned against God—O wicked, ungrateful creature that I am. May I endeavour to be better for the future, if it should please the Lord, in his adorable wisdom, to lengthen out my day among the living.

1799. *1st mo. 4th. Charterhouse Square, London.*—I was yesterday at Westminster Meeting; it seemed a solid, satisfactory meeting to almost everybody, myself excepted, in whom it seemed as if Satan had dominion. O Lord! Thou, and Thou alone, knowest my inability and very great weakness. I cannot even think a good thought, much less do a good action, except Thou art, in thy wonted loving-kindness and abundant mercy, pleased to help me.

I have been told to-day that I am a good boy, or words to that effect. My God, not only cause me to turn a deaf ear to all such flattery; but show, I pray Thee, to the world what I am,—continually sinning.

5th. Seventh-day.—Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty, for ever and for evermore, saith my soul; for his mercies endure for ever. This afternoon I went with my dear aunt Bevans to our friend Miller Christy's. The company was in a solid, silent waiting upon the Most High; and, blessed be the name of Israel's God, in my small measure I felt such a sweet calm over my mind, as to my present recollection I never before had felt. What shall I render unto Thee, my God, for all thy mercies unto me! The Lord thy God requires nothing more of thee than a full dedication of heart unto his holy will; the law of the Lord written in thy heart. I am the clay, Thou the potter; fashion me, form me, as seems good in thy sight. O that I may experience more and more of his forming hand day by day, redeeming me through his blessed Son from sin unto salvation. A Saviour, or I die; a Redeemer, or I perish for ever.

7th.—Yesterday I was at the Peel Meeting fore and afternoon; in both of which I felt my thoughts stayed, though not so much as I wished. O, Christ Jesus, do Thou come, rule, reign, and have dominion in my heart. O! knock down,

I pray Thee, the strong, ah! too strong, wall that Satan has built up against Thee.

2nd mo. First-day.—The evening should have been spent in retirement, or reading some good book; but, sad to say, spent for the most part in idle conversation.

3rd mo. 23rd.—To-day I am fifteen years old. Surely the Lord of the vineyard is about to look for fruits. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned. Baptize me, O most Holy Father, and I shall be baptized indeed. Cleanse me, O Lord, and I shall be truly cleansed. Purify me, and I shall be truly purified.

CHAPTER II.

BETWEEN FIFTEEN AND SEVENTEEN.

At an age when many young persons have to leave the endearments of home, or the shelter of institutions for educational purposes, to encounter the difficulties and the exposure not unfrequently connected with the acquirement of a knowledge of business and the preparation for the pursuits of manhood, W. F. had the advantage of continuing a few years longer under the parental roof, a privilege which he gratefully appreciated. There he continued his studies, and he was gradually introduced to some acquaintance with the principles and practice of his father's profession. His readiness to make himself useful, and to unite with his young friends in literary and philanthropic objects, increased with his years; and, though there is little of incident to notice at this time, his memoranda continue to show that the one thing needful—an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ—was steadily kept in view. Confined to the house by indisposition, he remarks:—

1799. *5th mo. 2nd.*—How grateful ought I to be to Almighty God for being blessed with such parents. May I according to the best of my abilities endeavour to repay their cares unto me. O! may it please the all-merciful Father to reward them with the riches of his love. What privileges do I enjoy above thousands of other children, in being favoured with such parents, and such a guarded education.

A little later his youthful aspirings are thus recorded:—

1800. *1st mo. 24th.*—O, that I was a Christian indeed! O, that I was favoured to feel more of the redeeming power of Christ Jesus at work in my heart!

2nd mo. 16th.—O Lord, my God! enable, I pray Thee, my hands to war, and my fingers to fight the good fight of faith: engage me in the Lamb's warfare. My soul is athirst after Thee, O my God; be pleased to satiate it, and permit me to drink freely at the fountain of life. Lord! Thou knowest how prone I am to evil and to self-indulgence.

5th mo. 2nd.—When he giveth quietness who can make trouble; and when He hideth his face who then can behold Him, whether it be done against a nation or against a man?

It may be regarded as an evidence of his steady purpose to cultivate a close and humble walk with God, and of the *strength* of that purpose, that his memoranda so frequently assume the form of *prayer*. It was the atmosphere in which the young Christian seemed to breathe, and in which his heart freely expanded in love and sympathy to the whole family of man. The Slave Trade had not yet been abolished by the British Legislature; and the horrors of the inhuman traffic, as well as of slavery itself, had deeply affected his sensitive mind. He thus pours out his soul on behalf of an injured and afflicted race for whose sake he afterwards did and suffered so much:—

1800. *5th mo. 7th.*—Lord, be pleased to look down upon me, and guide my soul to heaven. Be pleased, O Father of light, to open my eyes to see the iniquity of trading in the persons of my poor African brethren, for whom I believe Thou hast as tender a regard as for any of us, the highly favoured inhabitants of this island. But also, O Father, enable me through self-denial to bear a testimony against it among the people, by denying myself of those luxuries, by the using of which I cast in my mite to encourage a practice that I highly

disapprove of. Enable me, also, by the whole conduct of my life, to glorify Thee, who art no respecter of persons, whether African, European, Jew, or Gentile; but in every nation under heaven those who fear Thee and work righteousness are accepted of Thee, who art God over all, blessed for ever. Amen!

Again he prays for himself and for some of those who, like himself, were at that time preparing for the service of their God and Saviour:—

5th mo. 22nd.—O Lord, be pleased, if it should seem good in Thy holy sight, to look down upon me,—not upon me only, but upon all those to whom Thou hast been pleased to reveal thy holy will concerning them, in the secret of their hearts. Look down upon us, and enable us to withstand all the fiery darts of the great enemy of our souls' salvation. Most gracious God! be pleased to increase in our minds more and more of an awful solemnity, and constant watching even unto prayer. Glory be to thy great name, and to the name of Jesus for ever. Amen!

The next three months of his life appear to have been a time of close searching of heart; and it is interesting and instructive to see how honestly he dealt with himself. To him the message of the Gospel, as it had been brought home to his heart under the power of the Holy Spirit, contained no apology for sin; but the more he was brought to know and to love the Saviour, and to realize the blessedness of the "children whose sins are forgiven them, for his name's sake," the greater was his desire that, as a young man, "the Word of God might abide in him; that he might be strong, and overcome the wicked one."

When he was just completing his seventeenth year, he writes:—

1801. *3rd mo. 1st.*—The Apostle says, 1 John ii. 1—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." O, blessed Jesus, therefore intereede for me that I be not scratched out of the book of his remembrance; plead for me that a godly sorrow may prevail; that my sins—O! how many, how innumerable—may be set in order before my faee; that He may afford me graee to repent of them; that there may not remain the smallest deviation from the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus unrepented of; that I may, all the days of my pilgrimage in this probationary state, lead a life wholly devoted to thy service, and sueh as may show forth thy glory to the world; so that, when I have put off time and all things temporal, I may be admitted into the regions of eternal rest and peaee, there to join the chorus of angels and purified spirits in aseribing high praises to the name and power of the God of the whole earth, and the Son of his bosom, Jesus Christ, my Saviour, my Captain, and my King. Amen! if it be thy holy will, O God.

3rd mo. 8th.—My soul, a day shall eome when the angel mentioned in the words of prophecy (Rev. x. 5, 6) shall swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time to thee here shall be no longer; this time draweth nigh; every hour brings thee nearer to the awful period, when thou shalt bid farewell to everything on earth. Art thou ready to enter into that kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the admittanee of the Lord's ransomed and redeemed ones? Are thy garments washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb? Has it been the constant aim and bent of thy mind so to live as to be admitted at the end of all things here below into that glorious kingdom?

Oh, Lord, to these things I can sorrowfully answer in the negative. Then, my soul, it is high time for thee to double thy diligence. Arise up and be doing. Time calls for diligenee: it may be thy turn next: the consideration, how awful! the preparation, how solemn! Surely these are the most awful and solemn eonsiderations that ean engage our attention. Let this be the eonstant aim and purpose of thy mind, so to

live, that when the awful messenger does come, as most assuredly he will, either sooner or later, to summon thee to appear at the grand tribunal, thou mayst have to welcome him in this language—"Thy servant is ready to depart in peace." Consider the time thou hast already spent in the body; near seventeen years have passed over thy head, and how much nearer art thou than when thou first believed, or first became sensible of the divine operations of the Holy Spirit in thy heart, reproving for sin, and affording thee the reward of sweet, enriching peace, when thou hadst cherished its holy operations. How many lusts hast thou overcome? How many sins hast thou conquered? Oh! what needful, solemn queries! my soul consider them. Thou hast had many privileges afforded thee, compared to what the generality of mankind have had: a guarded education, the tender reproofs and watchful eye of dear affectionate parents. According to what thou hast received, for such thou art accountable.

Near the time of the Yearly Meeting he writes:—

5th mo.—Father! Be pleased to keep my soul in the very depths of humility during the ensuing Yearly Meeting, so that I may be permitted to reap instruction from the attendance of it. Thou knowest what a poor sinful creature I am, how prone to evil and continually sinning. Be pleased to open my state and condition to my view, and set my sins in order before my face, so that there may remain none unrepented of. Amen!

6th mo. 1st.—Most holy Jesus! Thou that art, that wast, that art to come—My Saviour, my Redeemer, my only hope of glory—I feel my weakness very great; how much I have need of thy holy aid. My sins are many, yea, very many. The old man of sin hath yet very deep root in my heart; and I am persuaded afresh this morning that there is no other way *feelingly to know* a remission of sins, than by an unreserved dedication of my heart to thy divine will; and through faith in Thee, in thy power, in thy blood which was shed

without the gates of Jerusalem for the sins of us poor mortals.

Renew my faith this day, Lord Jesus, if consistent with thy holy will. Oh! that every nation, kindred, tongue and people, might join in the chorus of praise. High praises to the Lord God and the Lamb be ascribed for ever and for evermore! Amen!

He was not much given to express his feelings to others; they were generally confined within his own breast; but about this time he lays open some of them in a letter

To Thomas Scattergood.

I daily see, and desire to see, more and more of the necessity of becoming a fool in the eyes of the worldly wise, that I may become wise unto salvation, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;—and the necessity of the heart-cleansing, purifying power of God in my heart, cleansing me from everything that is contrary to his pure nature. I have indeed lived long enough to myself and to my own heart's lust; it is now, and has been long since, high time for me to live to my God, to serve Him with fuller purpose of heart than I have done heretofore. I have sometimes taken encouragement under the persuasion that we have a High Priest touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who does not require more at our hands than He gives us ability to perform—praised be his holy name.

"I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."—John xv. 16. The desire of my heart is at this time, that the latter part of this passage of Scripture may become applicable to myself. When thou art favoured to approach the throne of divine grace in supplication, I crave a place, my dear friend, in thy prayers for preservation through the probationary state.

The young disciple had only just entered upon his

eighteenth year; but, young as he was, he had given proof of strong attachment to his Lord. It might truly be said of him that, "He was one of those whom the Most High is pleased to call to Himself in very early life, and to separate as 'from the womb' for his own peculiar service."* Though his memoranda do not clearly state the fact, it is well known from other sources of information, that he had already received a distinct call to the Christian ministry, and was conscious of the anointing of the Holy Spirit for such a service. Yet there is reason to believe that, *unduly* influenced by the desire to be kept from a premature disclosure of what was passing in the hidden depth of his soul, and the fear of running before he was sent, he "withheld more than is meet." That this was really the case, may be inferred from the public avowal which, many years afterwards, he was induced to make, for the instruction of others, that, had he been faithful to his own impressions of duty, he believed he should have come forth in the ministry of the Gospel when about sixteen years of age.

To those who are able to appreciate the simple yet exalted views of the Christian ministry which belonged to his religious training, such a statement will be no matter of surprise. Instances of a very early call and dedication to the service of the Lord, though not of very frequent occurrence, are to be found in the Holy Scriptures. It would be hard to say to what extent mere human arrangements and limitations may have interfered with the prerogative of Christ in the distribution of spiritual gifts, and

* See "A Tribute to the Memory of the Late William Forster, by one who honoured and loved him."

with their free exercise in his Church. In the case of William Forster, the Christian community to which he belonged interposed no obstacle in the way of simple faithfulness to his early convictions of duty; some time, however, intervened before he actually entered upon the work to which he felt himself "called of God."

CHAPTER III.

TEMPORARY SOJOURN AT SHEFFIELD.

In order to perfect himself in the knowledge of land-surveying, William Forster was placed in the summer of 1801 with his uncle, William Fairbank, of Sheffield. In his altered position he gave diligent attention to business, and the studies connected with it. But none of his temporal pursuits were allowed to divert his thoughts from the higher objects which had already claimed so much of his deepest feelings. With great earnestness he still cultivated the constant habit of self-examination, and of watching unto prayer that he might be preserved "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Though he had cheerfully acceded to his parent's wish as to a temporary change of residence, the many endearments of home retained a strong hold on his affectionate heart, and he keenly felt the separation from the beloved family circle. The following extracts from a letter to his mother, are evidences of this, as well as of his remembrance of some of the objects of his former kindness and care :—

My dear mother's most affectionate address was most gratefully received; it merited a much earlier acknowledgment, which is justly due to one of the kindest and best of parents. Though thus far distantly separated from my dearest connections, I am often present with them, with much affectionate solicitude, and they are one of the principal subjects that occupy my mind. I often feel anxious on thy account

particularly—thou said nothing about thy own health; I fear thou art not more careful of it than when I was at home. I should like thou would be kind enough to let Robert take the poor German something nourishing now and then. Several of the poor people I had so much pleasure in visiting I find have dropped off.

In allusion to the illness of a near relation, about his own age, he writes in his diary:—

1801. *9th mo. 4th. Sheffield.*—I this day received a more unfavourable account of my poor afflicted cousin, R. P. Birkbeck, which has much affected my mind, as he is one for whom I have a great regard.

Lord! if it seem good in thy sight, be pleased to look down upon my poor cousin, and comfort him in his affliction. Blot out his sins and wipe away his transgressions from the book of thy remembrance. Comfort his mind, and bear him up. Be Thou his support, his Saviour, his Redeemer, his only hope of glory; and, if it be thy holy will to cut the thread of his life in the prime of his youth, grant him the blessing of resignation, and permit him, when he shall cast off the clogs of mortality, to enter into the blessed society of purified saints and angels, with the infinite song of praises —high praises to our God. Favour him with a sight of this blessed kingdom, as from Mount Pisgah, so that his mind may be strengthened, by the animating prospect, to bear the final conflict with patience and resignation. Thus be pleased, O heavenly Father, to bless him, and finally suffer him to enter into the mansions of eternal rest and peace, where all is divine order and heavenly harmony. Amen.

On hearing of the decease of this cousin, he adds:—

1801. *10th mo. 14th.*—Surely such events as these are intended for our instruction, reminding us that we are but tenants at will. I desire for myself, and at times for my friends, that we may be concerned to live in such watchfulness

and holy fear, that when this solemn hour shall arrive we may, with pious resignation, adopt the language, "Thy will be done."

About this time the preliminaries of the short-lived peace of Amiens had been concluded between the contending powers of Europe. In reference to this unexpected change in political affairs, he remarks in writing to a friend:—

The people here (Sheffield) have been almost frantic with joy, as they expect the trade will receive great benefits; but I fear it will be some time before the desolating effects of the war will cease. However, I think there is occasion of humble acknowledgment to our Heavenly Benefactor, that He has been pleased once more to permit the sword to be sheathed, which has so long scourged almost every nation in Europe; not that I believe that he does now command war, but I cannot doubt, from His omnipotence, that it was by His Divine permission.

If His kingdom were but come in the hearts of men, how soon we should then see an end of wars; the Prince of Peace would then sway His righteous sceptre in the hearts of mankind, and all would then be in harmony and order; but from the present depressed state of society it seems hardly likely thou or I will live to see so happy a day.

His correspondence, as well as the records in his diary while at Sheffield, throw an interesting light upon his mental structure in connection with his religious experience, showing how constant was his watchfulness unto prayer, and how circumspect his youthful walk.

To Isaac Crewdson.

1802. *1st mo. 21st. Sheffield.*—I have long been of the sentiment that there is a secret sympathy and fellow-feeling

in the minds of those who are seriously and earnestly endeavouring to engage in the Lamb's warfare, which unites and binds them together in a bond stronger than the ties of mere human, interested friendship, and which may be the means of assisting them to bear one another's burdens whilst on the pilgrimage in this vale of tears, directing their course to a city which hath foundations, and whose maker God the Lord is.

I have, dear Isaac, frequently been induced to believe that our intimacy is based on no inferior motives, but that we are mutually desirous of strengthening one another's hands, and endeavouring to encourage each other to persevere in that path of piety and virtue which alone affords substantial peace, and also the prospect of eternal happiness in the world which is to come. How necessary, then, is it for all those who are desirous of partaking of that peace and fruition of perfect bliss, to suffer the cleansing, refining power of fire and water to fulfil its functions, to burn and to wash away all that remains of the old man and his nature, that we may become indeed new creatures. What beneficial effects does this spiritual baptism produce? It would initiate us into the kingdom of Christ, and make us Christians indeed. And if we know that we are subjects of such a glorious King, what need have we to fear the power of man—the tenant of a day?

The diary continues:—

1802. *2nd mo. 5th.*—Be pleased, O Father, of everlasting goodness, to look down on a poor worm beset with numberless infirmities. Sometimes permit him to enjoy a little of thy holy presence. Gracious God! humble me before Thee. When I turn to the right hand or to the left, or in the least degree deviate from the paths of rectitude, be pleased to make me sensible of it by the reproofs of instruction.

2nd mo. 7th.—I have endeavoured to be on the guard today in refraining from unprofitable conversation, for which I feel peace. Blessed be the name of the Lord my God.

2nd mo. 28th.—This morning comforted by a lively meeting.

Father, permit, if consistent with thy heavenly, divine will, that the ensuing week may be spent in more watchfulness and more stability than the past.

5th mo. 2nd.—Dearest Lord! be pleased to remember one who is just at the present time desirous of becoming as one of thy little ones.

6th mo. 6th.—Favoured to attend both meetings. The former, though silent, was precious and lively. In the afternoon, our valued friend, John Cash, of Coventry, preached in a solemn, instructive manner. Lord! Thou knowest I have great need. "Look unto me in the hour of temptation, and I will deliver thee.—Watch unto prayer."

6th mo. 25th.—"Lord! teach us to pray." Without thy divine assistance we can do nothing. We cannot even command a good thought, much less approach thy holy footstool in humble prostration, and crave the continuance of thy favour. I am sensible that Thou dost not regard any mere form of words, let them be ever so aptly chosen, and eloquently spoken. No! Thou lookest beyond the form, and seest us just as we really are.

7th mo. 29th.—Attended meeting this morning. The refreshing presence of the Lord was near; and his servants were commissioned to distribute freely instructive counsel and encouragement, addressed to us young men. I was desirous of taking much to myself, feeling I stood greatly in need of it.

8th mo. 8th.—Two silent meetings to-day, and my soul is renewedly convinced it is good to wait upon the Lord in solemn silence. The strong—and may not I say invincible—fortress to a religious mind is prayer; and if an evidence, though ever so slight, is felt that our petition is heard by the Father of Spirits, O! what a holy confidence is produced in his omnipotent Arm; enough to stay all creaturely fears.

8th mo. 13th.—Yesterday, attended the Monthly Meeting at Doncaster. The meetings were, I believe, satisfactory to many; but I felt under a cloud the greatest part of the time, which proceeded from my having shrunk in several instances from a testimony which I have frequently felt concerned to bear, in abstaining from the use of any commodities cultivated

by the blacks whilst in a state of slavery, in the West Indies or elsewhere. At this time I believe my peace of mind is concerned in the maintenance of this testimony.

8th mo. 27th.—O that my mind were more enlarged in universal love: many, too many, prejudices still remain against individuals, societies, and nations. O! my soul, thou never canst know this happy disposition of mind, until thy will is made conformable to the will of God; then shalt thou know what it is to dwell in Him who is the fountain of love; then wouldst thou love all men for his sake, and feelingly know that they are brethren, created by the same wise God; and thou the most ungrateful of them all.

I believe there is danger in indulging an unprofitably inquisitive disposition, that would be prying into those mysteries which are wisely concealed from the human understanding in its mere natural state. But as our minds come to experience something of the regenerating effects of the Spirit of Christ, redeeming us from our fallen state, and we become measurably sanctified, our understanding will be enlarged; and, as we are enabled to bear them, we shall receive ample illuminations in regard to heavenly things.

Many, I believe, who have been desirous of knowing more than was consistent with divine wisdom for them to know—doubting what they could not understand—have at length denied the most sacred truths! What arrogance for us, who are at best but poor, short-sighted creatures, to attempt to doubt the incomprehensible truths of man's redemption! We need go no farther than examine our own hearts, and compare them with the image of God, after the likeness of which the Scriptures declare our first parents were originally created. In a moment, then, we can but be convinced of our fallen state; and daily experience shows that we are by no means capable of regaining a state of acceptance with God, without the immediate assistance of his divine grace.

These are plain, simple truths; and can we doubt that He who is the fountain of wisdom will fail to dispense a sufficient portion of knowledge in heavenly things to all those who are willing to receive Him in the way of his coming? There is

such a thing as knowledge beyond the bounds of true wisdom. It will never, I believe, be inquired at the day of retribution, what or how much a man knows, but how he has acted his part here.

The deep interest which he felt on behalf of the numerous apprentices employed in the various manufactures of Sheffield, suggested the establishing of a First-day School for that class of young persons; but, as his tarriance in the town was of short duration, it is doubtful whether much was done to carry the plan into effect. In connection with this subject he makes the following reflections :—

The depraved situation of many of the poor apprentice lads, and others employed in the manufactures of this town, is obviously and painfully to be observed by every considerate mind. This may arise from several causes; but in my apprehension the principal defect lies in the manner of their education.

Perhaps from necessity, the father of a large family, as soon as they are able to earn a few pence towards their maintenance, takes them with him to the workshop or the grinding wheel. Here, from the example of elder lads, or even of men, their minds are by degrees inured to vice, until it becomes habitual. Instead of being sent to school to obtain a sufficiency of useful knowledge, they are suffered on a First-day, or at any other leisure time, to be running about the streets, spending their time in a very improper manner, perhaps in gaming.

To Isaac Crewdson.

1802. *3rd. mo. 31st.*—May that love and affectionate sympathy whereby I believe our minds have been united together, continue to increase, until we have run our allotted course in this vale of tears and state of probation; and then, in the regions of eternal bliss, may we be permitted to join with

angels and the spirits of just men made perfect in the song of praise to our Lord God and the Lamb, to whom be everlasting praise and dominion for ever. Amen.

This blessed state is what I would willingly hope every rational mind is desirous of attaining; but then the way to the crown lays by the cross. Here it is many have missed their way, and where I am ready to fear I shall sometimes fall. But what abundant consolation in the assurance that our Heavenly High Priest and Captain of our salvation is touched with a feeling of our infirmities! He has trod the path before us, and was tempted in all points, even as we are; and He never tries his servants more than He affords them ability to bear. I desire that we may be willing, in humble resignation and faithful obedience to our dear Lord, to leave the hindering things which would retard the progress of our journey, and press forward toward the mark of our high calling.

Well! thou wilt say, here is fine theoretical reasoning; but where is the practice? Ah, my friend, had I come up to the requirings of my divine Master, and submitted my neck to his yoke, I believe I should have found it easier work to have slain the potent enemy than is now my experience; and, instead of being under the continual necessity of acknowledging "I am a miserable sinner," I should have been instrumental in taking a brother or sister by the hand, and helping them forward. I am sometimes ready to wish my friends and those who I believe have an interest in my best improvement could see me as I really am,—a poor worm, encompassed and almost worn down at times with a variety of infirmities, and sometimes overwhelmed with such a flood of temptations, that I fear I shall never be able to stand my ground.

During a little excursion to Bradford, he spent a few days at Undercliff, with Christiana Hustler and her family, and remarks:—

4th mo. 1st.—I was at Bradford Meeting in the morning. In the evening a meeting was held at Undercliff, agreeable to

the usual practice of our valued friends; it was, I believe, a time wherein the consoling evidence of divine regard was felt by some. Such were not my feelings; mourning, and a desertion of that comfortable hope which is so refreshing to the poor traveller, was my lot. How could I expect any other, when I had so repeatedly incurred the displeasure of the Author of these blessings?

On his return to Sheffield, after describing a state of much inward conflict, he proceeds:—

4th mo. 11th.—He who had inflicted the wound for sin was the only one that could heal; and O! blessed for ever be his holy name, He poured in the oil and healed the wound by the smiles of his love; and before I got home I could rejoice on the banks of deliverance, and sing praises to his holy name.

One of the young friends with whom he had lately associated at Bradford, died after a short illness, soon after he had left. He alludes to the circumstance in a letter under the same date as the preceding extract:—

To ———.

The affecting account of William Hustler's removal has probably reached you. I little thought when we were enjoying ourselves on the canal a few days since, that one of our company was so soon to be summoned to the awful tribunal. It is indeed an instructive and very impressive instance of the uncertainty of our tenure of these earthly tabernacles, and a fresh confirmation of the truth that we have no continuing city here.

I think my heart has felt something of the benefit of silent waiting, both in meetings and private retirement. It is indeed good to feel our minds humbled and our hearts contrited before the Lord; it is at such times that God will condescend to prepare his own sacrifice, and enable us to erect an altar to

his praise; this is that true worship which will meet with acceptance before the throne of grace.

There is indeed a beauty in consistency; I often long to be more furnished with this virtue; and I am persuaded that a consistent and exemplary conduct will have more weight than any arguments that can be produced in the defence of the Truth. I often have to lament the inconsistency of my own character, and a sense of this is sometimes the means of preventing me from attempting to bear some few testimonies that I believe are entrusted to me. These are sometimes cause of much anxiety and trial to my mind, so contrary is my nature to the cause of Christ. A fear of being thought to affect those things that are not required of me, merely from the imitation of others who have appeared to be, and really have been, good and virtuous men, has sometimes too much influence, and acts as a discouragement; then I get bewildered, and a season of darkness and desertion of divine good ensues.

I have often to regret the want of the purest and most conspicuous Christian virtue — Charity: every day, nay, almost every hour of the day, seems to call it into practice. How I long that this virtue had more influence on my mind, and on mankind universally; what blessed effects would it produce. Wars would cease, the unrighteous gain of oppression would end, and we could then embrace every man as a brother, created by the same common Parent, and redeemed by the same blessed Saviour. The case of my brethren in bondage, the oppressed Africans, has much affected my mind for these many months past. It has indeed been as a heavy weight of exercise on my spirit, sometimes as much as I know how to bear. And oh! how I desire that I may faithfully give up to be or to suffer everything for their sake; even though it should be to become a fool among wise men—no easy matter—but with God all things are possible;—and be a by-word amongst my brethren. My unfaithfulness has cost me many a bitter cup.

I often fear I indulge too censorious a disposition towards my fellow-creatures, especially towards such as I think are

particularly inconsistent; though I seldom express it, yet I often feel condemnation in indulging such reflections; and am frequently led to consider that once I was a stranger in the land of Egypt and in the house of bondage, under the law of sin. But blessed be He who has brought my soul out of Egyptian darkness with a mighty hand, and shone upon me by his marvellous light. Oh! that every succeeding hour may be spent to his praise, and towards the increase of the glorious cause of righteousness on the earth.

To I. Crewdson.

1802. *9th mo. 20th.*—Oh! How high and holy is our calling, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord, to take his yoke upon us, bow to his cross, and follow Him whithersoever He shall be pleased to lead us, even though it should be to Calvary's sacred mount, or to the bottom of Jordan's hallowed flood, to know our sinful affections crucified, and our hearts washed with the water of regeneration. This must be our experience before we can become guests at his holy communion table, to partake of the blessing we have received by his flesh, and the spilling of his blood. When I reflect on the divine mercy, the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord of life and glory, I am lost, as was pious Addison in the contemplation of the mercies of God, in wonder, love and praise, and bowed in deep humiliation. Can the sacred story be a fable, invented merely to amuse or deceive us? No, it is *impossible.*

10th mo. 7th. Settle.—How sweetly encouraging was the latter part of thy letter to my depressed mind; but truly it is no easy matter to become a fool. Sometimes, in the hours of retirement, I am ready to conclude that, sooner than disobey the commands of my great Master, I could bear the reproach of all men. But when I am brought to the test, O, then, how my courage fails, and all my best resolutions are sometimes broken.

For many months past my mind has been deeply exercised on account of the slavery of the Africans; and I have at times felt it my bounden duty to refrain from the consumption of

any articles, either of food or clothing, that we receive through such "defiled channels."

So many discouragements appear to lie in the way, that I despair of ever being able to bear my testimony in this respect. I cannot find a single individual who is led in the same way as myself. A fear of being thought singular, and imitating others who may have clearly seen it their duty to become champions in so good a cause, has operated as a far greater discouragement than any little inconvenience I might suffer by the support of this testimony.

I have sometimes been ready to query in this matter: How many bright and shining lights are there in our day who are not called upon to suffer for such a testimony? Why should I distinguish myself above the rest, and appear as a speckled bird among my brethren? The answer that has almost always occurred is the language of the Apostle, "He that doubteth is condemned if he eat." I have never opened my mind to any one on this subject but thyself; and let me go where I will, or however occupied, this concern is a burthen to my soul; and the secret language of my heart has been, in effect, "Lord, I am willing to endure the ridicule and reproach of men; to follow Thee whither thou mayst be pleased to lead me, either by land or by sea, so that I may be the means, in ever so small a degree, in promoting the emancipation of my brethren." Yes, my natural life has been at times dedicated to the Lord on their behalf. But ah! what condemnation have I at times felt for disobedience in this respect, and the bitter anguish of my soul has been beyond description. O! for more faithfulness, more resignation to the Divine will.

Such were some of William Forster's reflections during his sojourn at Sheffield, while yet in his teens. As the shadows of coming events they possess a peculiarly touching interest and significance. The righteous cause of Negro freedom had already become part of his "meat and drink," and the sequel of his

life bears ample testimony to the depth and sincerity of his convictions regarding a system of human wickedness and woe then fully understood by few. The iniquity of slavery and the slave trade did not cease deeply to affect him till he laid down his life a solemn protest against it.

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN TO TOTTENHAM.—ENTRANCE UPON THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

Near the end of 1802 William Forster left Sheffield, and returned to Tottenham. His father had looked forward with comfort to his aid in conducting his business, and he did not disappoint his expectation. He entered with cheerfulness into the duties of his post, and gave satisfaction to those who availed themselves of his professional services.

The re-union with his beloved parents, and the interesting family and social circle in which he had been accustomed to move, greatly added to his enjoyment, and enlarged the sphere of his usefulness in intellectual and philanthropic, as well as religious pursuits. With regard to the latter, his memoranda clearly shew that, though a much larger portion of his time was now occupied with business engagements, continued watchfulness, a prayerful spirit and a searching self-scrutiny marked his Christian course.

1803. *4th mo. 18th.*—The last few days have been passed in greater unwatchfulness than usual. This evening my soul is humbled under a sense of my fallen and depraved state by nature, and afresh convinced how impossible it is that I should ever know a being established as a true Christian, but by faithfully abiding under the operation of divine grace, and desiring to be favoured with ability to co-work with the Spirit, to the thorough renovation of my heart.

5th mo. 15th.—Our meeting within these few weeks has been much favoured by the instrumental labours of divers ministers, by whom the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has been eminently preached; and, I believe, according to the ability afforded, they were enabled to divide the word aright. So that the formal professors, those who have a name to religion, and yet by their conduct evidently proclaim that they know but little of the operations of its power in the heart, have been reproved and invited to a nearer acquaintance with the God of their life. The poor in spirit, and those who have felt themselves bereft of substantial good, have been advised patiently to await the arising of the Sun of Righteousness, and the youth have been encouraged to leave every hindering thing, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It will already have been inferred that William Forster's appreciation and cordial acceptance of the religious views of Friends did not arise merely from educational or conventional influences, but was the result of careful examination, and a deep conviction of their Scriptural soundness. A circumstance now arose, not uncommon in those days, which put to the test his faithfulness in supporting the well-known testimony of the Society regarding the unlawfulness of all war under the Christian dispensation. In reference to this, he writes :—

7th mo. 31st.—Last week I was chosen by ballot to serve in the militia, and have received a summons to appear before the lieutenants and magistrates to-morrow morning at Enfield, to which place my dear father intends to accompany me. The desire of my heart is that my mind may be preserved calm and quiet, and that if it be required of me to give any reasons for the objection I feel to bearing arms, or by any means impeding the progress on earth of the peaceable kingdom of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that I may speak in the fear of the Lord, so that the cause of truth may in no respect suffer through me.

O Lord, be pleased to go with me, and let thy holy presence encamp round about me, that I may indeed bear this testimony in a consistent manner, and to the exaltation of thy glorious cause, though in ever so small a degree.

His prayer was heard. The ordeal was safely passed through; and a little later the following memorandum occurs :—

I appeared before the justices at the time appointed, found them civil and obliging, and was favoured to keep in a good degree calm, and to feel the weight of the testimony I desire faithfully to bear. The justices issued a warrant of distraint, and by that took my father's property; although it did not at this season fall to my lot to suffer for the cause, yet, with humility, I may say that I felt resigned to whatever my good Lord and Master might appoint.

It is scarcely possible not to admire the spirit in which the young disciple stood faithful to his Lord. Meekly firm in his refusal to sanction, by active compliance with its requirements, a system identified with the warfare of the world, he had in effect deliberately adopted the position—"I am a Christian, and therefore I cannot fight."

About the same time he was made humbly bold in enlisting himself more decidedly under the banner of the Prince of Peace, who had "chosen him to be a soldier" in the army of the Lamb, without the use of carnal weapons — without the shedding of human blood. It was only a few weeks after the above occurrence that he first spoke in a meeting for divine worship as a minister of Christ. There was a beautiful

coincidence between the two events—his passive resistance to human exaction, and his faithful obedience to a divine requiring. Each might be said to form an important crisis in his life, and we know not how far one might help to make way for the other. In both the thoughtful observer will discover more real heroism than lies on the surface. "Perfect love casteth out fear"—the love of Christ triumphed over the fear of man.

Though only a few months past the completion of his nineteenth year, he had long been preparing for the work upon which he had now entered, and we hear of none who were disposed to "despise his youth." His early offerings in the ministry are spoken of by those who heard him as sound and edifying, and as being remarkably attended by the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet he himself was sensitively alive to every little misstepping, altogether unnoticed as it might be by his friends, and carefully watched all the avenues of his heart with a godly jealousy, lest any unauthorised zeal should mar the work of the Lord. The following record exhibits his watchfulness in this respect, and the humility and tenderness of his prayerful spirit:—

9th mo. 14th.—O Lord, if I have done evil in thy sight, if I have this day too hastily called upon thy holy name, and offered a sacrifice which Thou hadst not prepared, be pleased to pardon me; consider my inexperience in the work to which I believe Thou hast called me and art still calling me. Favour me once more with the enriching blessing of thy life-giving presence, and enable me again to acknowledge that thy mercies and thy judgments are my chiefest consolation.

Whilst he deeply felt his own infirmities and

unworthiness, he had a high sense of the sacredness of the office of a minister of the Gospel; and, as he had not lightly assumed its functions, he was enabled to exercise them with safety to himself, and much to the comfort of his friends. A few of his own remarks will enable the reader to form some idea of the tone of his feelings at this interesting period :—

1803. *11th mo. 6th.*—I was at Winchmore-hill meeting; and, although it was small, yet I hope it was a favoured time. I felt engaged to revive that Scripture invitation in Isaiah, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Soon after, under some feeling of the awfulness and solemnity of the service, I engaged in public prayer. In these little acts of obedience, I found sweet peace.

13th.—Favoured to attend both meetings to-day. In the former, after a season of conflict, light arose, and with an apprehension of duty to express a few words; but not being willing to bear my dear Master's cross, I came away burthened. In the afternoon I found myself engaged publicly to supplicate at the throne of grace; and as I gave up to the opening of the heavenly vision, I found sweet peace, and may with some degree of humility say that best help was near.

When my mind is more than usually enlarged in love towards my fellow-creatures, then I am in some degree led to consider how many there are who remain in ignorance and darkness, and in a very great degree estranged from the joys of religion : among which class may be ranked our brethren who are groaning in slavery on the other side the Atlantic. And I am firm in the belief that the day is approaching when their cause will come to the throne of divine justice with availing authority. O! may that day be nearer than many imagine. These gloomy subjects may be dwelt upon too long. I desire not to make them too much a matter of conversation, or forced reflection, but believe, as my mind

comes increasingly under the influence of the mild and benevolent spirit of the Gospel, these things will work their own way. May I stand disposed with a ready mind and humble heart to follow the dictates of cool and considerate conviction!

In a letter to Isaac Crewdson, he remarks :—

12th mo. 24th.—Should we be permitted to meet once more, recollection would fail me in endeavouring to recite one-half of what I have gone through; and I do not know that it would be to thy benefit to enter into the various attendant exercises. They are now past, and only deserve to be commemorated for the mercies and long-suffering of a gracious God. Ah! I am a monument of his mercy; and should my poor shattered bark be favoured to anchor in the haven of everlasting rest and peace, it will, indeed, be another and striking testimony to the forbearance and tender mercy of our Heavenly Father.

I am favoured with a hope that as He has thus far sustained me under many probations, and measurably redeemed my soul from this delusive, changeable world, He will bear up my head under every succeeding trial, and conduct me safely through my uncertain pilgrimage.

Public affairs were again assuming a very serious aspect. The peace of Amiens had proved to be only a kind of armed truce. Bonaparte had caused himself to be proclaimed First Consul. New difficulties had arisen between the European powers, and negociations having failed to effect an adjustment, war had been again declared. It is to this that allusion is made in the following extract from a letter to his American friend, who, having finished his religious engagements in England, had returned to his native land.

To Thomas Scattergood.

11th mo. 21st.—I can testify that we indeed serve a gracious Master, who richly rewards all those who in simplicity give up to his requirings; and as we are concerned to abide under his teaching, He will indeed open a way where we can see no way. Surely He is worthy to be confided in now and for ever.

Of course thou art informed that the scourge of war is again permitted to visit this land. The steps that Government have taken in exempting our Society from any active share in the general plan of arming the nation, without our suffering either personally or by fine, does indeed demand our gratitude. It ought to engage us still more nobly to fight our spiritual warfare with those weapons wherewith we may be entrusted, and to maintain an allegiance firm to the King of kings.* Your calamitous state in being again visited by the yellow fever, has raised sympathy, I trust, in many minds

* Instead of subjecting Friends to fine or imprisonment in consequence of their conscientious refusal to comply with the present military requisitions, the Legislature, dispensing with their personal service, devised the means of their incurring a forfeiture of property equal to the supposed disadvantage to the state, in such a manner as to render them only passively liable, by simply empowering the Deputy-Lieutenants "to provide a substitute for any Quaker balloted under the Act," at a fixed charge of £20, and to "levy such sum" on the goods of such person.

It is interesting to mark the progress of more enlightened views, during a period of more than a century and a half, in the relief which has gradually been granted by the Legislature of this country to the Society of Friends, by the removal or alleviation of the peculiar trials and difficulties arising from their conscientious scruples. Copies of "certain clauses affecting the Society, in the Military Act passed in 1803," were accompanied by the following brief address:—

"The Meeting for Sufferings, in sending forward these extracts and this information, thinks it right to advert to the lenity which on this occasion, as well as on former ones, has been shown to the Society by the Legislature. It is a powerful call on us to continue vigilant in conducting ourselves as dutiful and peaceable subjects; and it is necessary to give great heed that our scruples may be, and appear to be, the consequence of a sense of religious duty. In this view, it highly behoves us to take care that our whole conduct be such as becometh the Gospel. This will tend to support the mind in difficulty, and awaken thankfulness to the

on this side of the water. But He who never visits his children for nought is, I believe, waiting to sanctify the dispensation. But, ah! how many are they who will not receive Him in the way of his coming, and thus frustrate his gracious design. For He does not afflict for nought, neither does He willingly grieve the children of men.

To I. Crewdson.

1804. *4th. mo. 4th.*—The great Shepherd and Bishop of souls is pleased to make use of a variety of means in refining and proving his exercised servants; but none more trying to that part which would flinch from suffering than the withdrawing of his holy, animating presence, and leaving us to know something of our own weakness; but this discipline is necessary for the Christian traveller. As he patiently abides in his tent all the wintry season, he will know the time for the bursting of buds to be come, and acceptable fruit will be apparent on his branches; and having known the probations attendant on a life of true religion, qualifications are received to occupy the allotted station in the Church.

Is it not for want of abiding the Lord's time under these baptismal operations, that so many dwarfs are perceived in the work of sanctification? Our forward natures would attain to the highest state of grace without passing through the preparatory operations of the Spirit; may we know our spirits to be cleansed from the many pollutions that abound in the world; and as we are baptized by one Spirit into one body, we shall know our fellowship to increase in Christ Jesus our Holy Head.

To the Same.

1804. *6th mo. 5th.*—Many and various have been the proving seasons of deep inward poverty that I have been tried with. But I may tell thee, with an acknowledgment of

Almighty for the benefits we receive, and also gratitude to those by whose means they are conferred."—See "Digest of the Legislative Enactments relating to the Society of Friends;" by Joseph Davis. Second Edition.

gratitude to our great Dispenser, that in these low times He has not wholly forsaken me; his everlasting arms were underneath, or surely I should have sunk through. And in his own time, which is truly known to be the best time, He has made bare the invisible arm of ancient strength, and again enabled me to rejoice in his presence. How great his mercy! how wonderful his dealings with the children of men! O! may my soul ever lie low in deep abasement, and ascribe all to his unmerited love in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And though many have been the hidden exercises of my mind, and very mortifying some of the labours I have engaged in; yet I may tell thee, I hope with humility, that as my eye has been preserved single, and my trust wholly and entirely reposed on Him, He has enabled me to perform all that He has called for, to my own peace, and sometimes, I trust, to the approbation of my friends. May we then, my beloved friend, be mutually engaged to surrender ourselves to his holy direction and divine disposal, casting all our care upon Him, seeing He is still so abundantly caring for us; and be concerned, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus, waiting to receive his holy counsel, and be willing to be taught of Him.

I remember now the request of some of his immediate followers, "Lord, increase our faith." And seeing that it is not in our will, or by the strength of our capacities, that we can experience an increase of faith, and also that without faith it is impossible to please God, may we be engaged in sincerity to adopt this petition of the primitive believers, and wait in deep humility to receive this invaluable blessing from Him.

1804. *8th mo. 26th.*—This morning, by the constrainings of heavenly power, I uttered a few sentences which afforded me peace. The afternoon meeting was trying: towards the conclusion life sprung up, and I felt myself called upon to testify of the goodness and condescension of the Lord in thus continuing to own us, in our large as well as smaller gatherings, by his good presence. But the wilful withholding of this small offering, through the apprehension of being thought forward, caused me some pain of mind, and I write this as a memento:

"Some are too backward, and others too forward; but all proceeds from unsubdued self."

To Robert Jowitt.

1805. *5th mo. 2nd.*—It is a nice matter, or at least so it has appeared to me, to follow business so that it shall neither occupy too much nor too little of our attention. To pursue it with too much indifference is the way to contract idle habits, which not only injure the mind but enervate the body. On the other hand, to follow it with avidity, as though our whole comfort, both in this life and that which will ensue, depended on the greatness of our temporal acquisitions, leads to many evils. It seems to fetter the mind to the earth, contracts our ideas as well as our hearts, and I believe tends greatly to impede the most important duty of this life, that of a preparation for another.

To Isaac Crewdson.

1805. *6th mo. 26th.*—In my last I mentioned to thee that my mind was exercised with the prospect of attending a distant Quarterly Meeting. I have been strengthened to carry it into effect; and was at the Quarterly Meeting for Suffolk, held at Ipswich, yesterday week, and on my return home was at two meetings in Essex. A retrospective view of this little journey affords me a degree of quietness and peace, which, as well as the preservation granted me, ought to clothe my mind with gratitude and deep humility.

I am at times, and that through mercy, favoured to feel that every gift, whether natural or spiritual, is a talent received from a bountiful God; and if He condescend to bless the exercise thereof, how does it become the instrument to lie low and confess the greatness of his power! And if He grant the evidence, that, though unprofitable servants, we have done his will, this would excite not only a prayer for future preservation, but a fearfulness of being elated through the vain idea that we have done something for the cause of Truth. Of all the evils that are subject to degrade and

debase humanity, this of spiritual pride has appeared to me the most disgusting; and though in order to be preserved from it, it is, I believe, necessary that we pass through a diversity of baptisms, yet, trying as these dispensations may be, if their tendency be to a true Christian humility, they will be ultimately blessed.

Taking into account the youth of the writer, it is difficult to avoid being struck with the amount of practical wisdom, as well as piety, which is here brought out in his simple, open-hearted correspondence with one or two of his intimate friends. There is no appearance of impulsiveness, no spasmodic effort; neither unmeaning mysticism nor ill-regulated enthusiasm is discoverable. A calm, healthy, persistent aim, faithfully to carry out in life and conversation the great "principles of the doctrine of Christ," characterises much that is here recorded. The Christian believer will not fail to recognise in all this, especially in connection with William Forster's early ministry, a satisfactory evidence that it was "the Lord's doing;" that it was indeed the "Spirit" who had "quickened" his soul and enlightened his understanding, uniting him by faith to Christ, in whom "all fulness dwells."

CHAPTER V.

RECOGNITION AS AN APPROVED MINISTER OF CHRIST.—FIRST JOURNEYS IN THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL.

In the midst of the ordinary pursuits of home, and his professional engagements, William Forster had "not neglected the gift that was in him;" for nearly two years he had continued so to "preach the word," as to make "full proof" of the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. The time had now arrived when it appeared to be the duty of the Church to recognise the reality of his calling, and, in the Eighth Month, 1805, he was acknowledged by Tottenham Monthly Meeting as an approved minister of Christ.

It soon became evident that his Gospel labours were not to be confined to any particular locality, but that he must be willing to give himself up to the service of his Lord wherever he might be pleased to send him under the anointing and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the following month he brought under the consideration of his Monthly Meeting an apprehension of duty to pay a religious visit to friends in Dorsetshire, and Hampshire, and in Sussex, and obtained the cordial sanction of the Church to his proposal.

He does not appear to have preserved any journalised record of this, and other religious engagements which followed each other in quick succession;

but extracts from his letters to his friends furnish some interesting particulars.

1805. *9th mo. 20th.*[3] *Brighton.*—I was enabled to cast my burden on my friends at our Monthly Meeting, and was, I trust, favoured to feel the unity of their spirits in the exercising prospect. I set off on the 7th instant, and think I have cause to acknowledge the goodness and mercy of the Lord in the preservation I have experienced both inwardly and outwardly. O! may all that is living within me bow in humble prostration before Him; thank Him for his past unmerited mercies, and make a fresh dedication of my all to his service. The Quarterly Meeting at Poole was a time that I trust will be remembered by many. I humbly trust the Master was glorified, and his noble cause of truth exalted. My mind was introduced into deep exercise, under an apprehension that it would be right for me to request an opportunity with such young friends as might be in town that evening. I informed the Quarterly Meeting for discipline of my prospect, who united in the proposal, and a Meeting was accordingly appointed. It was larger than I expected. It was grateful to feel the extension of the heavenly wing; and that the great Shepherd was stretching out the arms of his love with this merciful design, that all should be gathered into his fold of rest and peace; and that the standard of truth was exalted, and the people invited to repair unto it. After this meeting I felt very low, and as if I had done nothing for the cause, and almost ready to conclude the meeting had been held in vain.

After the completion of this, his first "missionary journey" as an accredited minister of Christ, he writes:—

10th mo. 15th.—I returned home this day two weeks, I think with a degree of gratitude to Him who was my Preserver through a journey of between three weeks and a month, in which there were many circumstances which proved to be

trials both of faith and patience, and tended to my humiliation. Travelling in this way has its difficulties and trials, of which few can form an adequate idea but those who have encountered them. But when the mind is resigned to apprehended duty, even these are made lighter than we have any right to expect.

In a full and perfect resignation of our wills to the divine will, there is peace, holy quietude, and true tranquillity of soul, to obtain which, it seems to me, is worth parting with every earthly gratification. I think I see the need there is for me to seek after a more perfect disposition of this nature: I feel the advantage of it for myself and for my friends. "The way to keep our enjoyments is to resign them," says William Penn; and in my opinion the way to lead a useful and virtuous life is to resign every passion of our souls, every faculty of our understanding, and everything that we dare to call our own, into the hands of Him who can dispose of us to his own glory, and our present and permanent peace.

The report of an abundant and well-gathered harvest was repeated throughout my little journey; and I think gratitude has been excited in my heart on hearing of such a plenteous and bounteous provision for a succeeding year.

In the Twelfth Month he was again liberated, to visit Friends in Buckinghamshire, and in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. He attended the Quarterly Meeting at Aylesbury, on which he remarks:—

1806. *1st mo. 2nd.*—I cannot easily forbear mentioning a circumstance which occurred to me at this meeting, as I think it will be instructively remembered by me as long as I live, and afford a useful hint to others who are beginning "to put on the harness." In looking this way, my mind had for many months been impressed that it would be right for me to seek some opportunity with the inhabitants of this town, by way of a public meeting. Feeling, as I thought, a return of the same exercise, on the morning of the Quarterly Meeting, I

mentioned the subject to a valuable friend, a minister, who recommended, if I felt the matter to arise with weight, that I should mention it at the close of the meeting for discipline. Apprehending that it might afford me some relief, I accordingly opened the concern to Friends; never was I witness to any matter of the kind being more weightily and tenderly handled. They apprehending that the time was not yet come for proceeding in that engagement, I believed my peace concerned in readily acquiescing with their better judgment, which produced relief to a degree beyond what I had expected. This was a time of humbling exercise, both in regard to what I passed through before I disclosed the matter, and afterwards. May I ever endeavour to cherish a disposition, ready and willing, to yield to the judgment of more experienced servants, and on all occasions put my trust in the Lord, and let Him plead my cause.

A week later he remarks in allusion to the time occupied by this service:—

To some of my acquaintance this may seem a strange way of passing that part of my life which is usually devoted to providing for future subsistence. I believe I am not unmindful that this is a duty I owe to myself and to my father's family.

But what must I do, when I think I hear the call, with that clearness which I dare not dispute, to leave my home and its tender ties, and follow my Master into distant parts? Will it do for me, who have been made a rich partaker of his free and bounteous mercy, to prove rebellious? Or must I not, in simplicity and resignation, attend on Him; and when He condescends to call, obey, and leave all consequences to Him; for He can provide, and surely He does provide, all things necessary for his humble, dependent children.

3rd mo. 4th.—I have no doubt that our gracious and long-suffering Master would cause our favoured Society once more to shine with its ancient splendour and conspicuous beauty

amongst the nations, if a greater portion of love were manifested towards Him, and faithfulness towards his precious cause. Though I believe that He would indeed thus marvellously work for and among our little Society, and in the feeling of his love towards us I rejoice in what might be effected; yet very different are the feelings when I am led to view the stripped and declined state of the Church in many places. Some who lately stood forward nobly and faithfully for the testimonies of Truth removed to their everlasting rest, and some of those who now stand as faithful standard-bearers, drooping under advanced age; and but few of the dear visited young people coming forward to supply the places of those who are removed and removing from this state of action. These things at times cover my mind with sadness, particularly when I have looked forward and considered from whence shall the supporters of the dignified cause arise, to uphold the principles and testimonies in a future day. But I have been strengthened to feel, and, in feeling, to believe, that there is a number preserved alive in the best life; and with the spirits of these was I, an unworthy creature, permitted to feel a degree of unity this day. How precious is the cementing virtue of the Truth; how it unites and binds together in one body those who love and obey it, all the world over! I think I felt something of it as I was riding on the road this day; and it was what I love to feel.

It has already been seen how deeply W. F. felt his being so much from home. He was fully aware that when he returned from Sheffield his beloved father was looking for his assistance in business, in the hope that he should thus be lightened of some of his own cares; and for a time he had cheerfully done what he could to render all the help in his power. But now, in the midst of his Gospel labours in some neighbouring counties, a fresh prospect of religious service opened to his view; and he felt that, without disobeying what he believed to be the divine will

respecting him, he could not turn away from it. Bowing, therefore, in humble submission to the requirement of his Lord, he thought it right, some time before his return home, freely to express his views in the following letter:—

To his Father.

1806. *2nd mo. 14th.*—I have several times thought of home, and looked much towards it; but believe, if I am favoured to return relieved, that, if it meet with thy approbation, it will be right for me to submit to friends a prospect which has for some considerable time lain heavily upon me, to pay a visit to friends in some meetings in the Eastern counties; and I think, if friends can set me at liberty, of being at the Quarterly Meeting at Norwich next month. I much wish for thy free opinion on the subject, and believe, if thou recommendst my deferring it awhile, I shall be satisfied. It is very trying to me to be thus absent from business, when I am sensible that my assistance would be useful; but as I think this is an exercise not of my own creating, it will be best for me cheerfully to acquiesce in the judgment of my friends.

It was no wonder that such an instance of filial duty and affection, kept in right subordination to the higher claims of obedience to our Father who is in heaven, should bring both parents, and brothers, and sisters into much tender feeling with the absent one, as well as on their own account, in so soon again having to give him up to pursue his allotted work away from home. But occasions like these were not new in that Christian family, and all united in encouraging the young disciple to faithfulness in the service of his Divine Master, whilst they could rejoice together in being permitted to feel the sweetness and preciousness of this beautiful example of Christian

dedication in a beloved son and brother. To him such sacrifices had ceased to be solitary acts of obedience to the will of his God;—they were rather as links in the chain which bound him to his willing service. The love of Christ constrained him to *live* not to himself, but to Him who died for us and rose again.

William Forster never afterwards engaged in any secular pursuit with a view to pecuniary gain. In the judgment of the Christian community of which he was a member, and according to his own religious convictions, the Christianity of the New Testament, though it sanctioned a suitable provision for the actual need of the ambassadors of Christ, while their whole time was occupied in the service of the Church, did not recognise the Ministry of the Gospel as among the authorised means of obtaining a livelihood, much less of acquiring wealth, and position in the world. That ministry received from the Lord Jesus, and not from man, was, on the contrary, to be exercised on the principle laid down by our Saviour Himself, when He sent forth the earliest promulgators of the truth as it is in Him, with the charge, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Its message of salvation was to be proclaimed to all in the same spirit which prompted the words of the apostle: "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus, the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake;" we seek "not yours but you." It was to be divested of any semblance of remunerative income or of official distinction—of everything that could tempt cupidity, or fire ambition—no sordid motives were to be connected with its sacred functions. Cordially accepting the highest scriptural standard regarding

the spirituality and freedom of the Christian ministry, William Forster well knew that to pursue the path which appeared to be marked out for him by a hand higher than his own, was to renounce his worldly expectations, and to adopt a life of continued and disinterested self-sacrifice. In the vigour of early manhood, surrounded by all the attractions of home, just introduced into a well-established and profitable profession, which, with ordinary exertion, bid fair to secure to him a comfortable independence, his earthly prospects seemed full of promise; and, besides this, "the duty which he owed to himself, and to his father's family," in these respects, pressed heavily upon him—keenly alive as he was to the most delicate perception of the ordinary requirements and proprieties of life. Under such circumstances, it was no easy thing for a young man of twenty-two, to do as he did—to count all these things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, freely to devote himself to Him—to spend and be spent in his service. But he had counted the cost; he hesitated not to give himself up to the disposal of his God.

In allusion to the work lately accomplished, and that which was now again before him, he says:—

I returned about a month since from a journey into some parts of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, in which I was for the most part favoured with the company and brotherly care of dear John Hull. On delivering in the certificate at our last Monthly Meeting, I was strengthened to cast before my friends another prospect which has long been before my mind, a visit to Friends in some Meetings in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. I feel this concern a very weighty undertaking, the more so as no companion has yet turned up. I trust, if

I am right in the movement, that I shall know as much of the sympathy of my friends as is good for me. Oh! it is strengthening, and affords such support that I seem as though I could neither stand or move without it. It is by no means the thought least trying to me when I think of it, that I have often to leave my dear father so much, at a time when I know my services would be acceptable to him; but he is very kind, and throws no obstruction in the way. It is a great favour to have such tender parents as I am blessed with. I wish I may sufficiently value the privilege.

He entered upon this journey very soon after the Monthly Meeting in the Third Month, 1806, and was diligently occupied in religious service for several months, with the exception of two or three weeks, when he was at home attending the Yearly Meeting. He met with many kind, faithful, experienced friends, whose tender care and sympathy towards this youthful labourer in the Lord's vineyard were both helpful and strengthening.

He moved along from day to day with much caution, and in great watchfulness, anxiously desiring that all his steps should be under the renewed putting forth of the heavenly Shepherd. He held many religious meetings with those who did not profess with Friends, mostly in agricultural villages, and in many places where the ministers of our Society had not laboured before. In several of the Monthly Meetings of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, he visited Friends in their families.

The following extracts from his letters relate to these religious engagements:—

3rd mo. 27th. Norwich.—The belief that I am not here in my own will, and that if I suffer it is for the Master's sake,

is supporting under all my trials. This life is a life of trial, both to faith and patience; and though it is, I believe, necessary, that we should be made deeply and humblingly sensible of our weakness and insufficiency, either to keep ourselves from falling, or to act for the honour of the precious cause, yet He who knows our frame and is perfectly acquainted with the weakness of human nature, will not permit us to be tried in this or any other respect beyond what He knows we can bear.

3rd mo. 29th. Yarmouth.—Whether the time of meeting be near at hand or far distant, let us be individually engaged in preparing for an entrance into that state of unpolluted rest, in which we shall know, I believe, no separation, and becoming each other's joy in this life, shall, I trust, be each other's joy to all eternity. To this state of rest I have sometimes been favoured to look, when I have thought that there is not much in store for me during my uncertain pilgrimage through this mixed state of things. But all this I wish to leave in humble, quiet resignation to Him who has a right to dispose of his unworthy servants even just as He sees meet.

4th mo. 15th. Leiston Abbey.—As the trial of our faith is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, it is, I believe, good for us that we know it to be sometimes brought to the test, though I may confess that such seasons are not very pleasant to my natural inclination. However, thus far I can feelingly acknowledge that help has been afforded in the needful time; and, though there have been some closely humiliating seasons, yet even for these I ought to be grateful, inasmuch as I believe many of them have been designed to keep me in a proper state of dependence, both for light and strength, on that all-sufficient source which, I believe, will never fail those who wait for renewed supplies.

4th mo. 22nd. Tivetshall.—The work is His: nothing, no, nothing, at all belongs to us; and all that I want is sufficiently to feel that after all I am indeed an unprofitable servant. And though it is a humiliating work to endure these emptying, stripping seasons, yet the more I see of the work of the ministry, and the more I am favoured to see of myself, my

own heart, and my many weaknesses, the more thoroughly convinced am I that my safety does greatly depend on feeling my own dependent situation, and in knowing that it is not of myself that I can do any good thing.

In the course of the present engagement, William Forster remarks, that seventy-five families were visited, in which, by subdivision, the whole of the religious interviews amounted to 176, and adds that, "though it had not been usual thus to subdivide families, and it was sometimes a little trying, yet it tended more fully to the relief of the visitor, and," he believed, "more to the satisfaction of those who were visited."

After his return out of Suffolk, &c., he writes to an intimate friend:—

9th mo. 25th.—The sympathy thou expressest for me under my trials and exercises was by no means the least acceptable part of the contents of thy letter. I am glad that in this way thou hast been made a sharer with me in my labours in that part of our Heavenly Master's vineyard. I do esteem it a very precious thing to be favoured to feel sympathy with my dear friends under their trials; and it is no small consolation when I can believe that they are permitted to sympathize with me.

Now that I am permitted to return in safety to my father's house, it is in my heart to tell thee that I have not served a hard Master. No. He was—and surely my soul can say, from present feeling, that He is—kind, just, and good. Though He saw meet that I should be tried many ways, even to a hair's breadth, yet He preserved me through all; so that I have had cause to acknowledge his goodness, and in the language of the Psalmist to cry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" This, in effect, was the breathing of my humbled soul many times towards the conclusion of my visit in reviewing his manifold

mercies. I am writing with freedom; true friendship will often lead to freedom, which is good when bounded by the holy limitations of truth.

In the Twelfth Month he was again occupied in a visit to the families of Friends in Ratcliff Monthly Meeting. Respecting this, he remarks :—

1807. 1*st mo. 5th.*—As to any fruits resulting from my feeble labours, should any arise, I do not wish to see them; all that I desire is an evidence of not having moved in my own will: this, in passing along, has been mercifully afforded —a favour which I desire to mention with reverence, and to remember with humble gratitude. On my return home I was strengthened to believe that I had been in the way of my religious duty—an ample reward for all the exercise and conflict I passed through.

CHAPTER VI.

ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE. W. F.'S ILLNESS. RELIGIOUS VISIT IN YORKSHIRE.

The spring of 1807 was rendered memorable by the abolition of the Slave Trade in the British dominions. A bill was brought into the House of Lords by Lord Grenville, then at the head of the Administration, and introduced into the Commons by Lord Howick, afterwards Earl Grey, and having passed both Houses of Parliament, it "received the royal signature on the 25th of March." By this bill it was enacted that "no slave should be imported into the British colonies after the first of March, 1808." After an arduous struggle of twenty years, such a triumph of humanity, freedom, and Christianity, over violence, avarice, and injustice, was an occasion of general rejoicing. Deeply as William Forster had long been interested on behalf of "our brethren groaning in slavery on the other side of the Atlantic," and "firm as had been his belief that the day was approaching when their cause would come before the throne of Divine justice with availing authority," (see p. 37), his heart could not fail to beat in unison with the nation's gratitude and joy, not unmingled with sorrow, though they were, that slavery itself should remain untouched. But about the time these important events were taking place, he was attacked with an inflammatory fever, which confined him to the house for some weeks.

Before he was entirely recovered from this illness, he believed the time was come for bringing before the consideration and judgment of his friends a prospect of religious service in the North of England, on which he remarks :—

In the early part of my illness, not seeing how it might terminate, I was earnest in seeking unto the Lord, that I might have a true sense of my situation ; and it was given me to believe, that since I had resigned myself to the work of the ministry, the day's work had kept pace with the day ; and I felt peace in the recent labours I had been engaged in amongst the members of our own meeting.

There were times when I felt desirous to be liberated from the conflicts attendant on this probationary state, and to be admitted into the lowest mansion of the heavenly kingdom ; although I saw it necessary that I should be more thoroughly purified in order to know a fitness for these blessed abodes. But as I grew stronger, I was led to believe that my measure of service in the church was not filled up. Under these impressions, I informed my friends in writing of my concern.

His health rapidly improved, and a week later he writes :—

To Sarah Hustler.

1807. *2nd mo. 9th.*—This quick restoration from a state of considerable weakness, I desire to esteem as cause for grateful acknowledgment to the Author of all our many mercies ; and to me it is no slight call to renew and increase my dedication to that blessed cause of Truth, which I think is become increasingly glorious in my view. I informed our Monthly Meeting in writing last Fifth-day of a prospect of religious service which has for some considerable time been in view.

This fresh summons to work in the vineyard cost me much. I cannot attribute that degree of resignation to which I have

attained to any efforts of my own, but to the kind interference of Him whom I have desired to serve. I feel it to be a fresh cause for seeking to be clothed with the garment of deep humility and lowliness of mind, and stricter watchfulness unto prayer. Yet the true disciples of their Lord have, according to their different degrees of experience, a living testimony in their hearts that they serve no hard Master; but one who is graciously condescending to compassionate their weaknesses, and to become the Helper of all their infirmities.

His friends cordially liberated him for the service to which he believed himself called; and, though still far from strong, he did not long delay entering upon it. The journey was principally performed on horseback, as was customary in those days, and he paid a pretty general visit to Friends in Yorkshire, and held many meetings with persons not of their community, and often in places where Friends did not reside. Though sometimes cast down, he was not forsaken of his Lord; and he met with much kindness and encouragement from his elder brethren, William Tuke, Thomas Priestman, Henry Tuke, George Sanders, and Joseph Storrs, being occasionally his companions in the journey. Not many particulars of his movements are preserved; but the following extracts from his letters give some interesting information as to the character of his services, and pourtray the humility and watchfulness with which he endeavoured simply to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

In the course of his travels he writes from Thirsk:

1807. *4th mo. 30th.*—When at liberty from religious exercises, either on my own account or on account of those amongst whom I have been concerned to labour, my mind is

often turned homewards; and, although when favoured with the belief that I was in the way of my duty, and filling up my small measure of suffering and service in the church, and that I have been permitted to find a home amongst those who were previously strangers to me, yet I forget not that it is only temporary. My dear father's comfortable habitation, and the many outward comforts it affords, have, in no small degree, an attractive influence on my mind; yet, as the profession I am making among my friends is that of a servant of Christ, I increasingly find that my safety depends on looking steadfastly unto Him for direction, and in humble submission obeying every revelation of his will. For the encouragement of others, I feel at times strengthened to acknowledge, that his light and his strength are sufficient: thus far I have found it to be the case, and the secret travail of my spirit often is, that my own will may become so fully subjected to his will that his power may have unlimited sway in my heart; so that all his gracious purposes concerning me, one of the most unworthy of his disciples, may be accomplished.

Whilst travelling along yesterday, my mind was strengthened to believe that thus far I had not been moving in my own will; and if this is but attained, it is all I wish for; as to any apparent good effect resulting from my labours, however encouraging it might prove, I see there would be a snare in it, that self might become so far gratified, that even if the creature were not exalted, there would be a danger of my forsaking my true guide, and running on in that natural will and wisdom which never can meet the righteousness which is of God. So that, although the humiliations wisely apportioned for the purpose of keeping the mind in its proper dependent situation, are hard to the natural part to bear; yet I can tell thee, I hope it is not boastingly, that when favoured at times with the aboundings of heavenly good, I feel so much the danger of being exalted above measure, that I have begged to be restored to my low habitation in the sheltered valley of deep humiliation and abasedness of spirit. Here we know our dependent state, and feel from whom all our fresh springs come.

The family visit at Rawden was concluded before meeting on First-day morning; it had been a week of pretty close exercise for the body as well as the mind. We had upwards of forty distinct opportunities, also two public meetings.

I think it a favour, that, after all, we could part with Friends of all descriptions in much love and apparent satisfaction.

William Forster pursued his labours from meeting to meeting in the strength given him of the Lord, but no details are preserved till he reached Helmsley. He spent nearly a week among the few Friends of that meeting and of Bilsdale; visited the families of both, and held several meetings with the inhabitants of those rural districts. He remarks:—

In most places I have found some religiously-disposed persons, in whom the good seed has not only been well sown, but I trust has taken deep root. I may be mistaken in my feelings; but, if I am not mistaken, true spiritual religion is on the increase in many parts of the country, and I think it may be said that in some places the fields are white unto harvest. There is not only considerable willingness to attend such meetings as are appointed, but many hearts are opened for the reception of such communications as have been offered, and the meetings are often crowned at the conclusion with such a solemnity as has left a pleasant impression upon my mind. Yet I think every fresh opening to service of this nature brings a portion of fresh exercise. I greatly trust this will continue to be the case, and desire to be preserved, moving simply in the guidance of that wisdom which only can safely direct. So that I may not rely on former extensions of divine assistance, but seeking for fresh evidence of divine requiring, and waiting for renewed supplies of holy help, I may be kept from presumptuously offering unprepared sacrifice, or attempting to promote the good cause of truth in my own strength.

Ah! there are so many ways of falling, and so many stronger than I have fallen, that my standing often appears very doubtful, and many apprehensions respecting my own safety at times abase my spirit; in the feeling of my weakness, I am often crying for divine preservation; that it may be granted continues the earnest desire of my heart. I think I ask no more; neither the high reward of heartfelt peace, nor the appearance of fruits from my labours. These might exalt the creature; but the blessing of preservation in the lowly valley of humiliation and deep poverty of spirit is a state of mind in which no flesh can glory, and, therefore, of all blessings, is, in my apprehension, the most to be coveted.

After the conclusion of his services in the neighbourhood of Helmsley, he was joined by his friend George Sanders, of Whitby, as a fellow-labourer in the gospel. He was his senior by nearly thirty years; an earnest, affectionate, and zealous minister of Christ, and one of those useful characters who conscientiously endeavour, in their walk through life, to serve the Lord in the way of his requirings, and, under the influence of Christian love, to employ themselves in doing good to their fellow-men.* In noticing the value of his companionship, William Forster remarks:—"It affected my heart with gratitude to that Divine Hand, who thus far, in the hour of greatest need, manifested Himself near to help."

Together they visited the families of Friends of Kirkby Moorside; had a meeting in a barn at Rossdale, and one with Friends at Hutton-in-the-Hole; also a large meeting with the inhabitants, more attending than the house would hold; came over the moors to the Monthly Meeting at Castleton; held a meeting next evening at Beadlan, which "in

* Piety Promoted: Part xi., p. 350.

consequence of the harvest was but small, but not held in vain;" had a large meeting in a barn at Farsdale; another at Castleton, much crowded; one in another dale, in a paved court-yard, where "the people, though unaccustomed to sit in silence, behaved well;" another in a barn at Leverton; and another at Moorsom, on the edge of the Moors.

After enumerating many small meetings visited in the north-east of Yorkshire, William Forster writes from Ayton:—

1807. *9th mo. 9th.*—In all these places I have believed it my duty to visit Friends from house to house,—an engagement increasingly humiliating and mortifying to my natural inclination; but having from day to day been favoured to believe myself pursuing the line of appointed duty, and help being mercifully extended equal to the work assigned, I have moved along with a comfortable portion of resignation. That peace has at times been my unmerited enjoyment, which not only amply compensates for all the trials and exercises into which I am sometimes permitted to be introduced, but operates as an encouragement to yield continued obedience to the divine requiring, in the hope that the same Power which has thus far supported will sustain unto the end.

It does not appear how long his faithful companion continued with him, but at the end of this journey the following letter was written:—

To George Sanders.

1807. *12th mo. 24th.*—I remember thee as a true yokefellow. As we were unitedly, in our different measures, permitted to partake of the afflictions of the Gospel, so were we, through tender mercy, made sensible of its consolations; and in our small measure we proved the truth of the observation of the Apostle, which to this day remains worthy of all

acceptation, that they that suffer with Christ shall also reign with Him.

Whilst writing on these things, may I be preserved deeply sensible that all that we received, whether of suffering or rejoicing, which was truly good, was not of ourselves, but of the grace of God. For I had rather remain abased in lowliness and heartfelt poverty of spirit, in deep feeling of my manifold infirmities, of various omissions and commissions, than presume to glory in that which was not my own. The more I see of the dangers that attend our uncertain pilgrimage through time, and the more I am made sensible of the infirmities of the flesh, the more I long to be united in spirit unto those who are happily of the number of the "poor in Israel," such as have no confidence in the flesh, and who dare not glory in anything save their own infirmities and the renewed revelations of the power of Christ, within them; whilst under the precious influence of his divine Spirit, the creature is too much abased to value itself upon this favour. O! that I were more humbled, more willing to become a little child; for surely then my situation would be safer than it is at present.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES IN SUSSEX AND HIS OWN QUARTERLY MEETING.

On returning from his long journey in the North of England, William Forster thought it his duty to ask for a certificate for religious service in Sussex. Very few particulars are preserved respecting this engagement; he soon left home, and from Hunt's Green, in that county, he wrote to an intimate friend:

1808. *1st. mo.*—To enter into a description of the various anxious cogitations that sometimes perplex my mind would be preying upon thy sympathy without affording me much solid relief. These frequent besetments of doubts and fears, if they do not utterly overwhelm my spirit, may operate as wholesome discipline in keeping my eye singly directed to the Source of unfailing help, and tend to preserve me from presumptuous sins. I sometimes feel a desire to resign myself entirely to this mortifying discipline; and even wish to feel after that disposition in which I can gladly embrace the rod; but I find increased cause to acknowledge that, although the spirit is sometimes willing, the flesh is weak. I trust my natural faculties, weak as they are, and my continual best exertions, are offered to the service of the good cause. But oh! how I tremble at times lest I should be deceived! Clear directions and preservation from a forward spirit is my frequent and almost continual desire.

Mayst thou, my beloved friend, continue faithful to all the pointings of the divine finger, in attending to small openings of duty, in labouring in the part of the great vineyard in which thou art placed, so that, if in divine condescension thou shouldst be made instrumental in watering other parts of the

Lord's heritage, thou mayst not have to leave home under the impression of having omitted any little opening for duty. I think I have seen that attention to what we may call small intimations of the divine will has often produced as much peace, and that as clear an evidence has been afforded of the sacrifice having been accepted, as those which we may have thought have more evidently borne the impression of divine requiring; and which in our estimation may be viewed as greater sacrifices.

After having held a meeting for the inhabitants of Arundel, he writes:—

My mind had been much attracted towards the inhabitants of Southwick; on mentioning how I was circumstanced I was encouraged to turn back. We reached T. L.'s about dinner-time. He and his wife cheerfully gave up a large parlour, most of their neighbours attended, and behaved with remarkable solemnity—it was to be remembered with thankfulness.

Another place now presented—a concern for the inhabitants of Worthing. Friends being kindly disposed to assist, we had a meeting there in an assembly-room. Many attended, and the opportunity was, in my apprehension, owned.

Further service very unexpectedly impressed my mind, in the same line of humiliating labour: our helpers still willing to continue their assistance. On the way to Littlehampton it appeared the right time to visit the Lidbetters. When we stopped at the door I soon felt under religious exercise. Feeling clothed with the spirit of supplication, and believing access opened for the prayer of intercession, strength was afforded to yield to the impression.

I rode for some miles under the humbling feeling of divine goodness, bowing my spirit in reverent admiration, and encouraging to continued dedication in the service of my Lord, and devotedness to follow Him in all the ways of his requiring. Renewed confidence was raised in his power to support through all, and my faith was confirmed in the sufficiency of his divine light to direct in the path of Gospel

obedience. By the time we reached Littlehampton I was again brought to feel the weight and importance of the service. The meeting began at six, and consisted of many who appeared much unacquainted with the nature of spiritual religion.

During a short stay at home, after his return from Sussex, he writes:—

To ———

1808. *3rd mo. 5th.*—Thou hast of late often been in my remembrance, and though it is long since I heard from thee, from what I have felt this evening I may safely tell thee that that love which was raised some years since in my heart towards thee still continues. It has been a source of mutual consolation, I trust, in past heights and depths; and sometimes we have dared to believe it has had its origin in something beyond our natural feelings.

And although with increasing years and increasing acquaintance with the way of peace, our tribulations should also increase, and our spiritual warfare with the foes of our own household and the delusive spirit of this fluctuating world should grow sharper, so much so as at times to induce us to despair of victory, yet, so long as we are occupying the measure of faith that may be entrusted to us, our experience will increase, and we shall see for ourselves the truth of the assertion that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Well, then, surely we have cause not only to unite in testimony to the goodness of God, and the excellency of the cross of Christ; but also, from our acquaintance with his gracious dealings with his rebellious and backsliding children, to yield ourselves more fully to his redeeming, preparing hand of power.

When we are brought to consider that all that we can do or suffer for the cause of Christ is comparatively small; and

when we see the excellency of his divine love, and the vast extent of his glorious design in carrying on the redemption of fallen man, surely this might operate on us as an inducement to an increase of dedication unto Him.

At times, my desires are strong for simple devotedness of heart unto God, free from all subtle transformations of self. But I am often made sensible that much of the old leaven is yet remaining. Self is too apt to intrude, and to seek a part in that which I may at times be permitted to offer. So that if ever my spirit be truly joined in that unity unto the body of Christ, of which, in times of favour, I have had a glimpse, there are many deaths yet to die, many baptisms yet to be baptized with.

And as all the earnest desires of men, and all creaturely exertions, are found utterly unavailing for the accomplishment of the Lord's work, how great is our wisdom in diligently and constantly heeding the Divine command "BE STILL." Much is comprehended in this emphatic injunction,—resignation, patience, a humble, watchful, and attentive frame of mind, waiting for the redeeming and new creative operation of the power of God upon the soul. May we fully comprehend it, and faithfully attend unto it, that our joy may be full, and that our unity may be perfected in the love of Christ.

A proposal for joining his former companion in some Christian labour, in one of the large Monthly Meetings in his own Quarterly Meeting, having been brought under his consideration, he writes:—

To GEORGE SANDERS.

1808. *3rd mo. 6th.*—I am desirous of assuring thee that as far as I have been favoured with capacity, I have secretly sympathized with thee; so much so that I have at times given way to a degree of jealousy over myself, lest feelings of this sort should so far operate as to induce me to manifest my unity with thy concern, by offering to join thee without being called into the work; so that in relation to the visit in pro-

spect, the exercise of my mind has been principally in desire to make a clear distinction between near unity with a beloved friend and elder brother in the Truth, and my proper share, if any, in the concern.

Such has been the exercise of my mind, and such it remains, that, whilst on one hand I feel afraid to say I am ready; on the other, I dare not, by any premature activity of my own, foreclose this way, which may possibly be appointed me towards the filling up of my small measure of suffering in the body.

Were I to indulge outward considerations, I need not be long in determining the matter,—my late long absence from home, and my unfitness for such a weighty engagement.

O! that thou, my dear friend, mayst continue to look in holy confidence to the unfailing arm of divine power. Surely our Heavenly Father will not only enable thee to continue steady in perseverance in the path of Gospel obedience; but will yet show forth his power in enabling thee faithfully to divide his word among the people. Ah! then, what can we say?—what shall we say? But let us trust in the Lord, and rely upon his protecting arm of power; for He is our strength and our shield, and we know that in times past He has proved himself our exceeding great reward.

The result of this correspondence was, that the service was unitedly proceeded with, and accomplished to mutual satisfaction. Before entering upon it, W. F. writes:—

To ——.

3rd mo. 23rd.—Self-love is a principle so predominant in my nature; it assumes such various transformations, and works so hiddenly in others, that I am aware it requires deeper watchfulness to detect its delusive appearances than is generally maintained by me. Although there may be times in which the tenderly visited children of the Lord are made sensible of their inability to move forward, they may be depressed under a sense of their weakness; the obstacles which

may present themselves in their way may dismay them; in feeling the temptations of an unwearied enemy, and in apprehension of the scorn and ridicule of the world, they may be bowed down, unable to help themselves, and almost despairing of further manifestations of divine power on their behalf, yet if they look from this lowly state unto God—if they pray for resignation to his will, and seek for confidence in his protecting care—will He not preserve them? will He not strengthen them by his mighty power? will not He remove difficulties and seeming impossibilities out of the way, rebuke the destroyer, and sweetly lead them forward in the way of peace? Surely we can assent to his tender regard over us, we can say that whilst preserved in his fear, in resignation to his will, and obedience to his requirings, thus far we have lacked nothing; no substantial enjoyment, no necessary thing, either temporal or spiritual, has been withheld from us. Ah! then, let us strive that our obedience may keep pace with his mercy; for although it is true that after all that we can do (and all that the best have done), we shall at last be but unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do; yet we have comfort in believing that He will grant us confidence in his mercy, and He will give us to attain to an assurance, that He has blotted our sins out of the book of his remembrance; and that our garments shall be made white through the blood of the Lamb, which was slain for the remission of sins to all those that believe and obey.

Not long after this engagement, he believed it to be his duty to hold some meetings with the inhabitants of his own immediate neighbourhood. It is to this service that reference is made in the following extracts:—

7th mo. 19th.—Had I written a few days since I should have told of but little more than humbling prospects of religious service, and very deep discouragements. But now I can tell thee of mercy and of goodness; for my way has not only been made in some degree in the hearts of my friends; but as I have dared to step a little into the path of duty that

I believed opened before me, the Lord has been my strength and my shield. Surely if ever a poor servant had cause to number his blessings, and crave a grateful heart for the favours that have been unmeritedly dispensed, I must acknowledge that I have. But even whilst recording my grateful sense of divine regard, I feel secretly instructed to beware of presumption, lest whilst acknowledging the goodness of the Lord, I should forget that my standing is still upon a slippery place; and that my safety is only in the sheltered valley of deep humility, and the frequent feeling of my dependence, poverty and weakness.

The creature is very apt to glory in that which is not its own, and to forget in whom is the fulness of strength and of heavenly joy. Thus far my passage through life has been attended with much suffering and secret conflict; but I have not repined. I believe it has been all in wisdom inscrutable; and I am led to believe that if I am preserved faithful unto the Lord, many bitters are in the cup appointed for me to drink; but all that I wish to be enabled to desire is resignation under all, and through all to say, Thy will be done. I could desire that I might fill up my measure of suffering in the body in quiet seclusion from the world; if I am favoured to prove myself a faithful steward of one talent it will be enough for me.

But if the prospects which of later days have opened with increasing clearness are to be pursued, there is not much probability of my being able to make provision for the future years of my life. This consideration at times plunges me very low; it proves my confidence almost to a hair's breadth. But when I consider that my attempts at support for the body without the blessing of providence would be unavailing, this seems to stop the train of my cogitations, and I repeatedly see I must cast myself upon the Lord. And as He sustained his servants in the days of old, so that they lacked nothing, I am inclined at times to hope I shall never know the want of food and raiment. I have stumbled upon a subject that I little thought would arise. I have hardly ever dared to name it to my most intimate friends.

7th mo. 27th.—To a rightly awakened mind no feelings,

with which we are tried, are so distressing as an apprehension of being deserted by Him to whom we have looked up as our chief friend, and on whom alone we have depended for substantial consolation in this life, and the fruition of eternal and uninterrupted joy in the life to come. But He, in whose promises we have believed, and who in his tender mercy has condescended to draw us into acquaintance with Himself; who has favoured us with an evidence of his love, and has strengthened us to manifest our love to Him and his holy law, by some acts of dedication to his divine will, is a God of unutterable compassion towards the children of his spiritual family. He will never leave nor forsake them. So that, although He may be pleased, for purposes inscrutable to the understanding of the natural man, to hide his face from them for a season, to leave them to a sense of their own weaknesses, to permit them through this means more deeply to feel the corruption of the heart of man, yet unto the patiently watchful, waiting soul He will again and again reveal the arm of his strength; He will cause his light to shine upon them, and give them to rejoice in his salvation.

Within the last four or five weeks I have been at several meetings within the distance of a few miles, at which I have been mostly alone as to any fellow-labourer in the work. I do not seem at present qualified to say much about them, and, had I followed my inclination, should hardly have hinted at the concern at all; but passing it by in silence might have argued want of confidence in the kind and affectionate interest thou hast manifested in my preservation. Every meeting has brought its share of exercise and conflict with it, some more than others; and it is a favour worthy of grateful acknowledgment that there is reason to believe that the cause, the precious cause of Truth, has not obviously suffered in any instance. After some meetings I have felt a degree of relief, but the general disposition of the people at large is so far remote from religious thoughtfulness that it is hard work to find a door of entrance among them. Two meetings are now impending in our immediate neighbourhood, which appear awful in prospect.

Most of these meetings, to the number of about thirty, were held within a short distance of Tottenham, in the villages and country round—in barns, public rooms, and other convenient localities; only two or three in Friends' Meeting-houses, and none in other places of worship. The time occupied in this labour of love extended over a little more than three months.

CHAPTER VIII.

VISIT TO SOME OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES, AND NORTH WALES, INCLUDING THE ATTENDANCE OF DUBLIN YEARLY MEETING.

Only a few months after the conclusion of his Christian labours in his own neighbourhood, William Forster again felt himself called upon by his Divine Master, to enter upon an extensive religious engagement in some parts of England and Wales, including the attendance of the Yearly Meeting in Dublin. He set out on this journey early in 1809, and returned near the end of the year, having been, during this interval of eleven months, almost incessantly engaged in the service of the Gospel.

The following brief extracts from his correspondence are characteristic of the writer:—

1809. *1st mo. 16th.*—I feel the want of a deeper sense of my great unworthiness, and a more lowly gratitude to Him of whose mercies I have so largely partaken. I know they far exceed my deserts, they are beyond what I have dared in favoured moments to ask or think. Have not I cause, then, to speak well of his goodness, and should not the feeling of holy gratitude warm my heart towards the Author of these my many mercies. What shall I render unto Thee, O God, for all thy benefits?

Unworthy as I am of his notice, I have tasted, I have seen, and I have felt that the Lord is good, that he is rich in mercy towards all those that desire to walk humbly before Him, and to be preserved in a sense of his fear; and therefore I can acknowledge that it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Ah! may all those who feel

the gently attractive influences of his love drawing them near unto himself, yield themselves with willing hearts to his all-wise disposal; and may those who have been in some degree instructed under the discipline of the Cross continue steadfast in their dedication, faithfully following Him through heights and through depths, that so they may become more perfectly instructed in his law, and know their experience to be enlarged in the sufficiency of his redeeming, delivering arm of power, for the full accomplishment of the unspeakably glorious work of their salvation.

2nd mo. 3rd.—It may have been in wisdom that some of the streams which have afforded me comfort and encouragement should be dried up, in order that my attention may be more continually turned to and fixed upon the Lord of Life,—the inexhaustible fountain of all good. But still as it has been a means graciously blessed unto us in earlier days, may we not hope, as we are seeking to be preserved in humility and watchfulness, that some small degree of life will continue to answer life; and that from time to time we may comfort one another with the precious assurance that brotherly love continues.

2nd mo. 20th.—I do not believe that we ever move with more safety, or greater approbation in the sight of Him who regards with the most compassionate care the feeblest of his little ones, than when we are humbly disposed to receive the smallest intimation of his will, and to obey the gentlest motions of his Spirit.

With reference to his extensive religious engagement, he writes:—

I often look at it with trembling of spirit, as well I may, under the apprehension that my feet will often be turned out of the path in which many more favoured servants are led. But it is not for me to point out the way, either for myself or others; all I want is resignation to such a portion of suffering as may be administered. In my better moments I can commit body, soul and spirit, into his hands, who, I

trust, is calling for this act of dedication to his service. My health within the last few weeks has tried me much; but I am better to-day.

He proceeded through Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, attending the meetings of Friends, and, in passing along, was kindly assisted by them in holding meetings in villages where our Society was little known. He speaks of one at Hardenberg as very crowded, but particularly satisfactory; he thought "he could feel that a real solemnity prevailed over the minds of many seriously disposed persons." A meeting at Rugby, the following evening, was large, and, "though exercising and laborious to his feelings, ended well."

At Birmingham he united with Sarah Hustler and Mary Capper, in a visit to the families of Friends. In the course of this engagement he writes:—

I hope that a release will be granted in due time; and if at the end an assurance is vouchsafed that I have been in the way of my duty, I think it will be received as an ample recompense, and the sufferings of the present day will, under such feelings, appear comparatively light.

He crossed over to Ireland, to attend the Yearly Meeting at Dublin, after which he returned to Liverpool and pursued his labours in Lancashire. Referring to the various trials of faith connected with the full carrying out of his present engagements, he remarks:—

5th mo. 25th.—I trust I am in some degree prepared to meet them; but the want of sufficient resignation is often the means of increasing my exercises far beyond what I believe is designed to be the case. On looking at myself in every

point of view, I am often ready to query, Who is sufficient for all these things? and immediately conclude, Not I. Yet help has been vouchsafed, and, in some favoured moments, I have found ability to make a full surrender to the service. I dare not now repeal the covenant I have made. I think I am not seeking great things. If preservation is afforded, and I am but kept in a humble, watchful, tender state of mind, it will be a reward far surpassing all that is possible I may be led through in the course of my little labours.

After being engaged in Staffordshire in attending the meetings of Friends, and holding meetings of a more general character, he writes from Macclesfield on the 12th of Sixth Month

To his Father.

My mind is just now considerably depressed in looking towards a meeting at Congleton this evening. It is a town that I have for some time had in view, under an apprehension that it might be right for me to go there on such an errand. After it was put into a train, I was quiet and relieved, and even now I dare not call the impression in question. But this is a kind of service which with increasing dedication I find increasingly awful; yet as this sense has at times a humbling effect, and excites fresh desire for right direction, I cannot wish it were otherwise; as I trust it may tend to my preservation under the various trials and difficulties which attend my present pilgrimage. When I look at my solitary situation, without a companion, it sometimes calls for more patience and resignation than I possess to behave with that meekness and humble submission which becomes a professed disciple of a crucified Redeemer. At other times, when clothed with the feeling of quiet resignation, such a calm has been produced that all my anxieties have been so far silenced that all that I have has seemed too little to offer in humble dedication to the glorious cause of Christ.

It is a great satisfaction to me to believe that my dear

parents are united with other Friends of our own meeting in earnest solicitude for my preservation ; and I have felt a wish that they may be strengthened to give me up into his hands who wrought a disposition in me to yield myself to his service before I left home.

Toward the end of the month, after visiting the families of Friends in Cheshire, and holding several meetings, he writes :—

Yesterday, at seven o'clock, attended a meeting that was held in a barn on the premises of one of the Friends. The people were long in collecting, but we had at last a large company for that neighbourhood—most of them living in farm-houses or cottages scattered about the country. My service in some such meetings as these seems like labouring where the plough has never gone before ; it is but seldom that I obtain entire relief, yet enjoying at times a portion of that peace I am seeking after ; and when, under what I have sometimes had faith to believe was in degree the pressure of the burthen of the word, I feel raised above the spirits of the people, and my heart enlarged in love, I have been enabled to go on from day to day, pursuing what has appeared to be the duty of the day, and am sometimes strengthened in faith to look forward to propects of service for several days to come.

In reference to a meeting at Millington, a village in the same county, he remarks :—

It was fully attended, and I was mercifully strengthened to discharge my duty to my own relief and encouragement ; but I was, as I often am after such meetings, very low and stripped of all sense of good. At this I do not repine, I would rather it were so than otherwise.

Attending to a meeting at Bailworth, he adds :—

Here my faith was closely tried, as much as I have often known it under such circumstances. I felt, as I had done for

several days, under a concern to have a meeting amongst the Friends' neighbours; but when I looked about me I could hardly perceive a single house. I do not suppose there are above two or three, and no village within three or four miles. But as the concern continued, and my peace appeared interested in it, I was strengthened to yield to the impression. I believe the Friends were tried at the proposal, but appearing cautious of discouraging it, they gave up the large commodious barn for the purpose. My host went in one direction, his son in another, and their man in a third, and they sent word by a woman in a fourth. It was a Seventh-day evening, and many were engaged in attending to their hay; but, to the surprise of all, many more came than any of us had looked for. They appeared to be generally great strangers to the nature of true religion; but I was strengthened to discharge my duty, and in that I have peace."

The prospect of visiting many places in North Wales, with whose language he was unacquainted, and where no Friends reside, was formidable to him; but he was comforted on finding that his friend, George Jones, who had been with him a good deal in Staffordshire and Cheshire, was prepared to join him in the service. In allusion to this he remarks:—"I can but admire, I trust sometimes with the feeling of gratitude, the kindness and mercy of my heavenly Father in thus opening a way for me to do what I believe to be his will;" and he also gratefully acknowledges the kindness of his friends, Ollive and Sarah Sims, of Stockport, in giving up their son Joseph, a young man about twenty years of age, to be their helper.

Of a meeting held in the Town Hall at Conway, he writes:—

I was for a while under very considerable discouragement, observing that the principal part of the company were, I

suppose, unacquainted with English; but, after a while, I ventured to tell the people the leading motive of my leaving my father's home, and of our gathering them together at that time, and something of the nature and the object of gospel ministry, so far as I had been acquainted with it. This opened the door to a more extended field of doctrine, and I was enabled to labour among them in an endeavour to gather their attention to the gospel of Christ under the feeling of much love; many appeared serious, and the solemnity toward the close was comfortable and relieving.

On calling to acknowledge the kindness of the person who had helped us to obtain the Town Hall, apparently a religiously disposed man, he thought most that were there understood English. I feel much for the natives as I pass along—there is an air of simplicity in some of the poor, particularly the young people, that interests my best feelings.

Writing from Northwich, on the 19th and 20th of Seventh Month, he says:—

Every day since my last has been productive of fresh exercise to my mind, so that, on attending the meetings we have been concerned to appoint, on looking back to the past, and anticipating the future, I have found as much to encounter as my feeble nature has been equal to; and had not best help been mercifully vouchsafed from time to time, I fully believe I should have sunk under the burthen, or fallen by the way; so that I think I never saw more abundant cause humbly to commemorate the sustaining arm of Omnipotence revealed for my support than during our engagement in Wales. I am desirous that my beloved connections at home may be fully sensible of the many mercies I have recently received, and that they with me may be concerned to ascribe all praise to Him from whom I believe they have proceeded; that, having shared in some degree in the previous exercise, they may also partake in the reward. I am glad of the opportunity of rest and quiet this evening; both mind and body are so far exhausted as to need some relaxation.

Early on Fourth-day morning, the 12th, we set off from

Llanrwst to cross the mountains for Denbigh. After we had travelled about twelve miles over a wild, dreary country, and could hardly find a person to give an answer in English as to the way, we stopped to bait at Llansannaer. Almost from the first of entering the village, my mind was drawn towards the inhabitants, and I thought of a meeting; but, considering the improbability of their understanding English, I was discouraged. But, after a while, I met with a woman who seemed seriously disposed; and, guessing at our errand, she told us that if we would stop and "preach" there were some that would understand us. Her importunity did not help me, and I suffered our horses to be brought out, and was just about setting off with a heavy heart, when a pretty large day-school broke up, and the boys gathered round us. It almost immediately occurred that perhaps we might have the school-room during their dinner-time. The matter was soon mentioned to the people, and the scholars were employed as messengers. The schoolmaster as readily did his part towards making way for us. In about half-an-hour the room was full; had not a word been spoken, my mind was impressed with a feeling of solemnity and quiet that would have satisfied me.

We reached Denbigh about three. A meeting at the Town Hall, in the evening, the largest we had in Wales, gathered in a very short time; a door of utterance was widely opened, help being mercifully vouchsafed in the hour of need; it afforded me encouragement and relief.

We had a meeting the next forenoon at Henllan, the inhabitants mostly Welch. There was a feeling of openness among the people. I endeavoured to speak very deliberately, and hoped that our labour was not entirely in vain. We were at a large meeting at Ruthin in the Town Hall in the evening; low at the beginning, but I hope it ended well. We had a meeting in the Town Hall at Bala the next evening, in which I was helped to labour far beyond my expectation. We came on next morning to Cerwne, and had a meeting; rather a low time, but I hope not entirely in vain. We had a fine ride in the afternoon, most of the way

along the course of the Dee to Llangollen, and had a meeting in the evening, a solid opportunity, quiet and relieving; got safely along to Ruthin over a high mountain, but did not reach our inn until about twelve o'clock. I felt less fatigued on our arrival than when we began the day.

The meeting on First-day morning, the 16th, at John Bancroft's, three miles from Ruthin, was large. The concourse was so great that it was agreed to move the seats to a favourable situation in a field; the morning was warm and fine, the scenery of the country picturesque, the appearance of the poor Welsh decent and respectable. The people collected in much stillness; there was considerable solemnity; and they separated very quietly, as if their minds were impressed with that which is beyond words. On Second-day we had a very crowded meeting at Wrexham, and a small meeting at Malpas the following evening, on the way to Wrexham. I felt concerned for the prisoners in the county gaol; admittance was very readily granted, and we saw them collected in their chapel, perhaps eight or nine debtors, and six or seven criminals; many understood English. They soon settled in quiet; and I felt something which induced me to believe that some of them were alive to the feeling of good. The meetings at Northwich, Sandbach, and Middlewich were not without a portion of exercise and trial of faith, but are each worthy to be remembered in grateful acknowledgment of the help afforded.

From subsequent accounts, it appears that William Forster was engaged through the summer, principally in North Wales, in holding meetings in towns and villages where no members of our Society reside. He also visited the small meetings of Friends, and solitary individuals. Widely separated as they were, it was a comfort to him to meet with them, and to witness their integrity and steadfastness in the Christian principles they professed. He was cheered

more than once by meeting with fellow-labourers in the Gospel, and particularly so at Haverfordwest, in being with William and Rebecca Byrd. Of this interview, he says: "I do not know that ever I felt exactly the same degree of comfort in meeting with fellow-travellers as at that time. The remembrance of the fellowship I thought myself permitted to enjoy with them, is still reviving."

He had turned back to Bangor, where he says:—

We had a very crowded meeting at an inn. Next morning, after many discouragements, another very crowded meeting was held in a school-room at Beaumaris, an improving town of some considerable trade for that part of Wales; and I think the situation as beautiful as that of any town we visited, and we were at most of the market towns in North Wales. From the place where we held the meeting, we had a fine view of the bay, Penmaen Mawr, and many other of the mountains in the North of Carnarvonshire; but it was the people, and not the face of the country, in which I was most interested. The mountaineers appear to be generally very poor, and meanly clothed; and, to look at their secluded situation, one might suppose that they were strangers to much of what we consider the comforts of civilized life, and that their wants were consequently few; so that I was surprised to hear that many of them possessed property to no small amount. I was pleased to find that their children are now generally in the way of receiving some kind of an education, through the exertions of the Calvinistic Methodists, who abound in all parts of Wales, particularly in the counties bordering on the Western coast. We had a very pleasant ride to Carnarvon—a meeting at eleven in the market-hall the next day. G. J. speaks of it as a solid opportunity; but as for me, I am often so low after these large meetings, that I seem to have no judgment about myself or the meeting. We got a hasty dinner, and set off as soon as we could for Pwllheli,

a town on the southern coast, which forms a promontory into the Irish Channel: the distance was about twenty miles. I think it was after six when we arrived: the inhabitants were then collecting in great numbers for their different places of public worship. We fixed on a room in the house at half-past seven; it was soon completely filled, and the passage very much crowded. Being enabled to give way to what I thought required of me, I was strengthened to labour among the people, and found my mind unexpectedly and remarkably relieved at the close. Some serious persons solicited another meeting; but, considering we had had what I thought a favoured opportunity, I was most easy to look towards setting off early in the morning. A pretty many people attended a meeting at Tremadoc, fifteen miles off, a small town near the coast; I thought it rather a low, trying time. From thence we rode to Harlech—a poor place indeed. The best accommodation we could get for a meeting was a room in the house of a labouring man; it was pretty well filled, and we have been at meetings that have yielded me more discouragement. We had a meeting next morning at Barmouth—not large, but relieving. We travelled along a road cut out of the side of a mountain; and, the sea coming direct to the foot of the precipice, it had rather a tremendous appearance. From the highest point of the road we had a very grand view of the Bay of Cardigan. After holding meetings in some villages on the way, we came to Aberystwith. When within about a quarter of an hour's ride of Tal-y-bont, we observed the people gathering in large numbers at a Methodist Meeting-house. On proposing at the inn where we alighted to hold a meeting in the neighbourhood, they soon showed us a commodious shed, which opened on to a small common, and very readily sent word to the congregation, so that they were informed at the close. The people seemed to come down with one accord. I did not obtain all the relief I should have been glad to have felt; but I trust we did not appoint the meeting in our own will; and, when I can but believe that my feeble endeavours to do right are under the direction of wisdom superior to my own, it generally has a tendency to calm my

mind, and to remove the feeling of anxiety as to the results of my little labours.

After leaving Pembrokeshire, W. F. came into Monmouthshire and Herefordshire, visiting Friends, and holding meetings among the inhabitants, both in towns and villages. In the Ninth Month, he writes :—

I have abundant cause humbly to acknowledge that mercy and goodness have followed me from time to time, by which I have been encouraged to repair to the Rock of my strength ; and, as my reliance has been simply placed thereupon, it has never failed me. The weight of the work before me, or the previous sense of my own unworthiness to stand forth as a public advocate for a cause so great and glorious, have often so deeply abased my spirit that I have seemed scarcely able to call forth the sympathy or fellow-feeling of those from whom I had formerly received counsel and encouragement, or to assure those to whom I had been attached in tenderest affection, of my continual regard.

Thou wouldst hear of our visiting some parts of North Wales, remote from any meeting of Friends. This was a service I had looked towards with no small degree of fear ; and in the accomplishment of it many were the trials of faith and love that I was permitted to endure. But now that it is finished, and I am again favoured to enjoy the society of friends whom I prefer to myself in every point of view, I see very abundant cause to acknowledge that mercy and tender kindness have followed me from time to time ; and I can now believe that even in my most trying moments the invisible arm of Almighty strength was underneath for my support, although I could not then perceive it.

Diligently pursuing his course, he came to Worcester, where he united with his elder friend Mary Alexander, of Needham, in a visit to the families of

Friends. Near the conclusion of that engagement, early in the Eleventh Month, he writes :—

Had I supposed, when I left home at the close of winter, that I should have seen the fall of the leaf in this county, I think the prospect would have had so far dismayed me, that I very much question my having found strength to turn out at all. But the future is wisely and kindly hidden from us, and I never find myself more prepared for attention to what I apprehend to be my religious duty, than when I can simply confine my mind to the exercise immediately before me, and leave the future to Him who knows what is best for his little children, and can alone qualify for his own work. We finished the visit to the families of Friends in this meeting this evening. It has proved a very arduous work, exhausting both to body and mind; but we have found abundant cause to acknowledge that strength equal to the service has, through condescending kindness, been vouchsafed: we have met everywhere with an open house. To have been made sensible from time to time of gathering love and mercy has not unfrequently humbled my heart—may it excite to greater diligence in seeking after increased watchfulness and resignation to the divine will.

In the prospect of further religious service he continues on the 14th :—

Thou wilt not wonder that I should be renewedly plunged into a sense of my weakness and great unfitness to appear on behalf of such an unspeakably glorious cause. But this is my greatest comfort in moments of conflict, that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us—that he knows our inability to promote the work of righteousness among men, is acquainted with the extent of human infirmities; and that, so far as it is his will to employ instruments in his service, He will clothe them with strength for the purpose, and graciously condescend, by the restraining influence of his grace upon their simply devoted and resigned spirits, to prevent them from

attempting to engage in that which He is not requiring at their hands. Here is my confidence; this is my chief support. Ah! then, for greater dedication of heart and resignation of will, greater watchfulness and deeper humility.

11th mo. 23rd. Dudley.—Soon after finishing my last, we came on to Bewdley, where we found a meeting appointed for us in an assembly-room: it was fully attended, but for much the greater part of the time it was very low and trying to my feelings; many seemed so much unacquainted with the truths of the Gospel that it was hard to meet them on their own ground. I thought I had some apprehension of the state that Paul was brought into when to the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak, but without much expectation that my feeble endeavours to serve the same Master had in any way answered that end.

On Seventh-day morning we had a cold ride over some part of Bewdley forest, through a heavy shower of snow, to Cleobury. The meeting was very small; but I was preserved in quiet, and felt but little disposition to call the movement in question. We came back to Stourport for a meeting in the evening. Among the many who attended, I thought there were some experienced in religious exercise; to these I felt the current of Christian counsel and encouragement to flow, and, in seeking to fix their attention more firmly on the everlasting Rock, I found some relief. But the feeling of full relief is what I very seldom enjoy, either after my labours among Friends, or the people more at large. Perhaps it would be too much for me, more than my weak vessel could bear, with a sense of that deep humility which I am increasingly convinced must be the principal clothing of spirit in a servant of Christ. It is but seldom that I think I can perceive any good effect resulting from my feeble attempts to yield obedience to what I believe are the requirings of truth; nor do I find any peace of mind when I look that way. I feel an increasing restraint upon enquiring of others of their opinion respecting my services. I have such a dread of that spirit which would value itself because of the use that it may appear to be of in the cause of Christ; and which leads its poor,

deluded, ignorant followers into a sort of spiritual exaltation, that I wish to encourage a yet greater degree of holy jealousy over myself, and deeper attention to the inward approving or reproving power of Truth.

It was a fine moonlight night and a sharp frost. The distance might be rather more than twelve miles to Stourbridge. It was past eleven when we got in; but we met with a kind reception from Sarah Lowe, and soon retired.

Next morning we were at a meeting at Chadwiek, a country spot in rather a thinly inhabited neighbourhood. We had the company of some serious people, whose countenances did me good. In the evening attended a very crowded meeting at Stourbridge—a very low, depressing time; but I was helped to wade through it, and towards the close to rejoice in the triumph of life over death and darkness. Samuel Baker, now in his eighty-third year, and his son James, walked from Birmingham that afternoon, a distance of twelve miles. The latter continues with us a kind and valuable helper.

In the course of his further travels he was detained some time at Coventry by a visit to the families of Friends there; not long after which, his release from the present field of labour appeared to draw near. With this prospect before him, he makes the following record:—

Home and its many comforts have been much before me of late; and, although my health is upon the whole remarkably good, I consider it a favour that I am likely to find a shelter under my dear father's roof. I hope I may pass this winter with much less suffering than the last. I cannot say that I dare to flatter myself with the expectation of returning into the enjoyment of what is usually termed reward. Much of this, I believe, would not be good for me. This I know, that I have done nothing that has any claim for such favours. I feel much of that unprofitableness and emptiness of all that is worthy to be called good—that which leads me much to desire I might be permitted to enter into obscurity and secluded

from the notice of the world or the church, seeking after deep humility and more perfect conformity to the divine will.

With feelings like these, the young evangelist returned from his long missionary journey, of which comparatively little is recorded here. He was not prone to say much of his doings, and, perhaps, a little too apt to dwell upon his own weakness and unworthiness. Yet, in proclaiming to others the unsearchable riches of Christ, he was often made a partaker of "the joy of his Lord," and could speak well of his name. A short time after his re-union with the beloved family circle at Tottenham, he writes :—

I took a pretty direct course from the Quarterly Meeting at Coventry homewards. I met with a welcome reception from my beloved connections ; and, my mind being for many days clothed with rather an unusual degree of peaceful serenity, I had much enjoyment in my *many* domestic comforts. O ! what cause there is for all those who are striving to trust in the Lord, to acknowledge that He dealeth bountifully with them.

CHAPTER IX.

VISIT IN DORSETSHIRE, HAMPSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE, AND THE EASTERN COUNTIES.

About a month after his return from his engagement in the North, William Forster makes the following remarks :—

1810. *1st mo. 30th.*—Let us with humility and confidence look unto the Lord, and wait upon Him for the renewal of our strength ; in all our ways acknowledge Him, and desire that He may direct our paths. And then, whether the fig-tree blossom to our sensible perception or not,—whether our days be spent in unremitting prosperity and tranquillity, or the scene be chequered with the storms of temptation from without, or dispensations of spiritual famine within, our rejoicing will be in the fulfilment of his will ; and the full fruition of our joy shall ultimately be in the excellency of his salvation.

As the spring advanced, he again left the parental roof to visit, in the love of the Gospel, Friends in Dorsetshire and Hampshire. As heretofore, he held many meetings with them, and with the inhabitants of those parts generally ; and often in places where the religious principles of his own community were but little known and understood. The great object of his ministry everywhere was to invite souls to Christ, that they might partake of the fulness of the blessing of his Gospel ; but no detailed account of his services during this engagement is preserved,—except that, with characteristic self-depreciation and

singleness of eye to the glory of the Redeemer's name, he writes from Lymington, Hampshire :—

5th mo. 1st.—I hope I do not want extraordinary revelations, nor the gift of eloquent utterance. They may safely be entrusted to more humble and redeemed minds ; but, however much I might rejoice in them for the cause' sake, for my own sake I believe I should tremble. This is a path which hath its peculiar tribulations, perhaps such as every one cannot comprehend, nor would it be wise to attempt to describe it as such everywhere ; yet it has its peculiar advantages ; it leads into many humiliations and frequent sufferings ; and surely these are designed to effect a good work, to produce humility and true devotedness of soul. But I do not find that I increase in these Christian virtues, and am not without a fear lest in that respect this grace should be bestowed in vain.

Returning home in time to attend the Yearly Meeting in London, he was in the summer and autumn occupied in religious service in Oxfordshire, and in the Eastern Counties. At one time during this engagement he says :—

7th mo. 17th.—When faith is raised in the sufficiency of divine grace, and I can believe that light and strength will be afforded equal to the exercise of the day, then reasonings, doubts and fears, are removed, and, in passive resignation, I am made willing to continue given up to serve the Lord in the way of his requiring ; and, when his love prevails, I feel as if I could follow Him into the remotest corners of the earth.

Sometimes distant prospects are opened before me, and I can see but little probability of settling down to the pursuit and lawful enjoyment of the comforts of domestic life. I often try to close my eyes on these openings, and to look towards a quiet retreat ; but then all is darkness and distress.

I have abundant cause to acknowledge that hitherto the Lord hath helped me; and that the way has been made before me when and where I could see no way.

Faithfully and industriously did he pursue his labours in the Gospel, ever watchful to ascertain and to follow the immediate leadings of the Holy Spirit. Fully agreeing with his brethren in religious profession in their views of the Christian ministry as set before us in the New Testament, he had a strong conviction that the ministry of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a gift from God himself; and that, whilst "no man taketh this honour unto himself but they that are called of God," in the exercise of this sacred office, the putting forth of the good Shepherd is to be waited for from one time unto another, and its services to be performed only under the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost and in the ability which God giveth. It was, therefore, no wonder that, with a mind so sensitive, so extremely delicate and cautious as was his, the faith of this devoted labourer should sometimes have been closely tried. But, though tried, it was not permitted to fail in the hour of need. Thus, writing of a meeting he had at Ipswich, in the Tenth Month, he remarks:—

Long formidable in prospect, I was low in going there, but not much more so than usual; but ere I had sat long the enemy was permitted to assail my mind, indeed to that degree, that I was almost lost in a cloud of darkness and indescribable distress.

I sought for quietness, and endeavoured to appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, but all seemed in vain. At length the tempest gradually abated, my confidence was renewed,

and I was made willing to embrace a small opening to service. The meeting closed in supplication, and I returned rejoicing in the mercy of our Omnipotent Deliverer. O! it could be nothing short of divine interposition which in that awful hour sheltered my poor soul for the sake of the great cause.

The Apostle Paul—determined to know nothing among his brethren save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified—speaks of being with them "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling," reminding them that "his speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," in order that "their faith might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." And, though "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him," those who have themselves trod the path of faith will not fail to recognize, in this simple record of William Forster's experience, some of those

"Footprints in the sands of time"

which, perhaps, many a brother, like-minded, and like-tried,

"Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
Seeing, shall take heart again."

About this time he writes to a friend in affliction from a recent bereavement :—

11th mo. 4th.—The dissolution of the tender ties of kindred may perhaps be considered among the most poignant afflictions with which we are tried whilst passing through this probationary state of being. But I can comfortingly believe there are no trials which would be more certainly and more sweetly

sanctified, if we were but willing to yield ourselves singly and simply unto Him who is waiting to pour forth the most substantial consolations, the richest blessings—to prepare us by the humbling visitation of the power of Truth, reducing our wills into submission to his divine will, for a participation of those joys which are enduring and eternal.

O, my dear friend, in feeling with thee this evening, how abundantly am I convinced that the Lord is merciful, that his dealings towards the children of men are ordered in unfathomable love, that whilst He is humbling them under a variety of dispensations, He is assuredly waiting, by the gathering arm of his kindness, to draw them near unto Himself, in order that, living under the government of his Holy Spirit, and suffering Him to direct their steps, they may be made partakers of that peace which passeth the human understanding; and, whilst it is given them to rejoice in his salvation, how would they have to sing both of judgment and of mercy!

And now, whilst I feel that the tender mercies of our heavenly Father have been extended for thy consolation and encouragement in early and in reeent times of trial and perplexity, I can searcely suppress the desire that his love ma yet more and more pervade thy soul, graciously drawing thee from a relianee on all sublunary engagements into a holy hunger and thirst after righteousness—that in the days of graeious visitation thou mayest be strengthened decidedly to avow thyself a devoted follower of a crueified Redeemer.

I believe thou art not insensible to the influence of his love, that thou hast seen, perhaps more clearly than many, the beauty of holiness and the exeellency of the Truth—that there have been and yet are times in which, like a favoured disciple, thou art sitting at the feet of Jesus, approving the things which are excellent. But are there not times in which nature is shrinking from the obedienee of faith, in which thou mayst be ready to desire an easier way than that which the world ealls foolishness; and in moments of eonflict mayst be ready to adopt the language:—Remember the weakness of thy servant—deliver me from this hour of conflict? If these be the seeret pleadings of thy visited mind, in them I can sympathize with

thee, and can believe that He who has drunk the cup, who knows the bitterness of it,—that He who has trodden the path before us, and is now calling us to follow Him in the same blessed way,—that He will strengthen to obedience all such as are desirous of being enabled to take up their cross and follow Him. Thus would He enable thee to prove thyself bound unto his law, and to the testimonies of Truth. For, praises to his name, He is the strength of his people; their faith may be proved, and their love may be closely tried, yet here is the promise:—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

He now returned home in peace; grateful for the help vouchsafed to him in the accomplishment of past services, he surrendered to the church the certificate he had held; but, still intent upon his Lord's work, he asked for and received another, liberating him for fresh labour.

CHAPTER X.

JOURNEY IN THE NORTH.

NORTH-WESTERN PARTS OF ENGLAND, AND THE ISLE OF MAN.

Before the close of 1810, William Forster was for some weeks closely occupied in visiting the meetings and families of Friends, and in labouring amongst the inhabitants of towns and villages in the north-western parts of England, to whom he felt attracted in the love of the Gospel. Of these engagements an interesting resumé is contained in the following letter:—

To John Bateman.

Edge End, *First Month 30th, 1811.*

My dear aged Friend,—Since I left my father's house, now about two months ago, thou hast been very frequently and affectionately in my recollection, and sometimes I have felt a desire to let thee know where I am, and in what direction I am bending my course, with the hope that thou wilt feel for me, with desires for my preservation every way. When I compare myself with those who have attained to a good old age, and have nearly finished their course, I seem to have seen but few years, and to be but an infant in religious experience. Yet almost every day brings with it such deeply abasing views of my own unworthiness, and a fresh feeling of the awfulness and importance of the work in which I am engaged, that, while I tremble for my safety, and for the honour of the precious cause of Christ, I crave an interest in the prayers of those who may be favoured with access to the footstool of the holy throne, that I may be kept under the notice and regard of the Heavenly Shepherd—lively, tender,

and watchful in spirit, patient in suffering, and devoted in faithfulness to follow the leadings of "The true Light" wherever it may guide me. O, this is what I desire in my better moments, far beyond an increase in those gifts and qualifications which are obvious to the natural man, please the superficial mind, and draw forth the praise of those who are living above the simplicity of the Truth.

I feel much openness, and tenderness of affection towards thee, my dear friend, something like that of a son to his father—much that comforts me in believing that thou canst and dost feel for the little striplings who are sent forth without purse or scrip, who, through many wadings and baptisms of spirit, are endeavouring to do their Great Master's will, so far as they are counted worthy to be made acquainted with it. And thy kind and fatherly encouragement to me, when last in your country, has often been sweet in my remembrance, and as it is now revived this evening, with something of the savour of life, is like a little brook opened by the way, for the refreshment of a weary traveller.

I am now writing from the house formerly inhabited by Tabitha Marriott; one whom I suppose thou rememberst as a mother in Israel, honourable in her day. I like to see the habitations of the ancients as I pass along, and to hear of those whom the Truth has dignified, and who were preserved under its sacred influence to the close of their day. There is something like the savour of life unto life in the recital of their humble dedication and prudent zeal in the promotion of the good cause. But, alas! how are their seats still vacant in the Church! How few seem to have been prepared to "catch the mantle as it fell!"

But surely there is cause to acknowledge that our Heavenly Parent is mindful of the family. He is visiting the youth by the influences of his gathering love; comforting and quickening the aged; and strengthening, supporting, and defending those whose lot it is to bear the heat and burthen of the day. Ah, my spirit is humbled in the fresh feeling of His goodness to his heritage—the little remnant of Jacob.

I came from home pretty direct to Birmingham, and from

thence into Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Cheshire, to the Quarterly Meeting at York. I was at some meetings on the east side of that county, and came to the Quarterly Meeting for Lancashire held at Preston, about two weeks ago, and since that time have been pretty fully employed in the middle part of this county. In some places I have attended meetings that have been appointed for the people at large, in which I have had to admire the kind assistance of Friends, under whose care I have been cast. And the condescending goodness of the great Head of the Church, in supporting me under these humbling exercises, graciously vouchsafing a little ability to advocate the Redeemer's cause, has often filled me with thanksgiving and praise. Some of these meetings have been satisfactory opportunities, in which I have obtained some relief. But I am often bowed into a state of deep self-abasedness, in the apprehension that, as I pass along further north, I shall be called to stand forth in the same humiliating line of service. How often do I tremble when I look this way! But there are times in which I can put my trust in the Lord, and then I have peace, and hope of preservation.

Since the Quarterly Meeting at York, George Sanders, of Whitby, has been my kind companion; and I believe he is likely to continue with me for two or three weeks longer. When I am clear of this county, and some of the north-west parts of Yorkshire, I propose going on into Westmoreland and Cumberland; and, as I have for some time had a prospect of visiting the Isle of Man, if the way should open for it, and a suitable companion be provided, it is most likely I should go there from Cumberland, and, if I am favoured to return in safety, then bend my course towards Scotland. My health has thus far been preserved beyond my expectation, which is a blessing not to be lightly esteemed.

No one intimately acquainted with William Forster, would long fail to discover to what a large extent he was "allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel;" but self-abasedness had become so much

the habit of his own mind—like Mordecai of old, after the king had delighted to honour him, he was so much accustomed to "retire again to the gate"—that, in speaking of himself, he seldom suffered anything to transpire as to the character and fruit of his ministry. Contemporary, though unpublished evidence, however, goes far to establish the fact that, wherever he went, his labours in the Gospel were abundantly blessed, and calculated to win souls to Christ, as well as to edify and strengthen the believer in Him. Thus, we have the well-remembered testimony of an eye and ear witness* to the character of his ministry, in a meeting held during this journey, at Bradford, Yorkshire. The meeting was large; most of the clergy and ministers of the Gospel of the district were present. After an unusually solemn silence, William Forster rose, with the words of the forerunner of our blessed Lord, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Taking a clear and comprehensive view of the ruined condition of man in the fall—his sinfulness and helplessness—he dwelt with such power and unction upon the abounding love and mercy of God in providing for his redemption through Christ, setting forth the infinite value and extent of the Saviour's atoning sacrifice, the renovating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, and the practical requirements of the Gospel, that a deep impression was evidently made upon those present. Years afterwards, the meeting was spoken of by persons of different denominations as a very memorable one. "That man's preaching goes to the root of the matter, and to the

* Sarah Hustler—one of a thousand among the "honourable women" of that generation.

very hearts of his hearers," was not an uncommon remark; while in his own community, many could testify how much, under the divine blessing, they owed to his ministry, and the telling example of his early piety and persevering devotedness to Christ.

Pursuing the course indicated, he came into Cumberland; and, in the spring, accompanied by John Wilson Fletcher and William Miller, he crossed over from Whitehaven to Douglas, in the Isle of Man. The following particulars of his labours among the inhabitants of that island are extracted from his letters:—

1811. *4th mo. 11th.*—We came to Castletown about ten miles; it was a clear morning, and we had a pleasant ride. We came through Ballasalla, a village about two miles from this town, of which I had heard before, and was rather desirous of getting to. After we had breakfasted, and deliberated awhile on the safest mode of proceeding, we made inquiry for a suitable place for a meeting in Castletown, and then fixed on returning to the village. We put up at the house of a Scotchman, where we found what was necessary for us; but the want of cleanliness was very apparent. We fixed on the school-room, which was readily obtained. Many seemed desirous of having the meeting-house, and it was offered us; but I was best satisfied to put up with what might appear inferior accommodation. I took a walk in the country in the course of the afternoon, met with some serious and religiously-inclined people, and distributed a few books. I rested awhile at the house of a husbandman, who remembered some of the former visits made by Friends to the island, and seemed to understand and spoke favourably of some of our principles. The meeting was long in gathering, but at last the place was full and much crowded; the people were quiet, and I thought that some solemnity prevailed. We had a dark walk back to Castletown. I was a good deal fatigued, but favoured with a quiet and peaceful mind.

12th.—The weather was very stormy; and it being what is

called "Good Friday," it did not seem likely to answer to appoint a meeting in the morning. We secured the use of the assembly room. The meeting was very fully attended, and there were many who wore the appearance of great respectability. Through the fresh extension of best help I was assisted to labour to the relief of my own mind.

My tarriance in the neighbourhood of Whitehaven was a very low time; when I considered that I was entering the field of labour single-handed, without a yoke-fellow in the ministry, my spirit was brought into fearfulness and dismay; yet I now believe—and the persuasion excites some feelings of gratitude, and seems to warm my soul with praise—that there was an arm underneath for my support, that it was the invincible power of divine love that kept me from sinking below hope in the merciful protection of that gracious Being, who in some favoured moments had helped me to commit my life into his hands, and to leave all for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. This transient retrospect of the mercies recently received, quickens me to renewed solicitude, that by more entire and unreserved dedication of myself to his service I may be counted worthy of the continuance of his favour, and that by a deeper and more constant watchfulness of spirit, I may be preserved from doing anything against the Truth, or casting any stumbling-blocks in the way of those who may be weak in the faith.

13th. Feeling still drawn towards the South, we set off after breakfast, and walked to Port-le-Mary between four and five miles, and after some little difficulty obtained the use of a parlour belonging to a widow: notice was extensively circulated, and a large number of people collected, many more than the room would hold; but they stood within hearing, and seemed satisfied with their accommodation. My mind was much enlarged under what I believed to be the influence of best love; and, as matter was given, I endeavoured to open it to the people. I think it was a good meeting, and desire to remember the opportunity with gratitude.

14th.—We were stirring early, and went to Port Erin, a village on the sea-coast, hoping that we might obtain a

meeting in the course of the forenoon; but the people appearing to be of the mind that we could not have an opportunity of seeing them generally till their return from the kirk, it seemed best to give way, and appoint the meeting at an early hour in the afternoon. We had prepared a room for the purpose, which was considered to be as large as any in the place. Such a concourse was gathered together in a short time, that, although the afternoon was unfavourable, it was thought better to seek for a suitable place out of doors. We soon found a good-sized yard, enclosed with high walls: the people did not seem so much prepared to receive the truths of the Gospel as in some other places; but they generally behaved well, and showed us marks of kindness. We met with the captain of a brig that had been driven ashore by the storm on Sixth-day afternoon, after having been in danger of being dashed in pieces by some tremendous rocks on one side of the entrance to the harbour. He seemed to be very much cast down, and thought he should be likely to sustain considerable loss. He appeared to be a serious man, and capable of appreciating the favour of the preservation of their lives. Since I came to the island, and at many other times, I have been brought into the feeling of tender sympathy with the situation of those employed in a seafaring life, and the trials and difficulties to which they are frequently exposed. This winter has been remarkable for the number of wrecks upon the coast; and I hear that many lives have been lost. Some affecting instances have been related to me; in the hearing of them my heart has been moved within me, and I have been prepared more highly to appreciate the comforts and superior advantages of a settled way of life. Poor boys brought up to the sea are educated under disadvantages which those who have not been eye-witnesses can scarcely conceive. Having a meeting in view for the inhabitants of Castletown at seven o'clock that evening, we got there in time for a little rest and had another large and crowded meeting to my satisfaction.

15th.—We directed our course towards Peeltown, most of the way through a wild, uncultivated country. On our arrival

the appearance of things wore but a discouraging aspect; it was a day of leisure, and the people seemed to be in a state of grievous dissipation. I was soon brought very low, but thought we should be hardly excused holding a meeting. We made considerable inquiry after a suitable place; but nothing seemed to offer that appeared eligible except the Methodist meeting-house, which was proposed to us by some of their own society, and I had a hope that the opportunity might prove instructive to some. We called upon some serious people after meeting, who seemed kindly disposed.

16th.—I was pleased and somewhat encouraged by the solid countenances of two young men, who called upon us in the morning for books. I cannot say that I felt fully relieved, yet I was best satisfied to go on to Kirk Michael, a village about nine miles distant. On our arrival we made inquiry for a suitable place for a meeting that evening. My companions met with one of the principal farmers in the village, who showed himself kindly disposed, and assisted them in procuring the use of a court-house, for which liberty was granted by the bishop's chaplain. The meeting was very fully attended, and crowded to an extreme; the people seemed generally inclined to behave well; but some rude men who were intoxicated, having mixed themselves in the crowd, occasioned such a disturbance, that I thought it best to break up the meeting, and appoint another for the next morning. This I regretted very much, but it appeared almost matter of necessity. I thought I could perceive that there were several well-disposed people at the meeting, who appeared much concerned at the behaviour of their neighbours.

17th.—The meeting in the morning was small, and far from relieving. I returned to our inn under the pressure of great discouragement, and for a while knew not which way to turn, or what to do. My mind had been previously drawn towards the inhabitants of the country, about two miles back; but for a while I could scarcely reconcile myself to the prospect, and thought of proceeding direct for Ramsey or Douglas. I ventured to mention the matter to my companion, John Fletcher; and, finding that a person of

considerable respectability in that neighbourhood was at the same inn, we consulted with him about a place, &c. He was kindly disposed to encourage the proposal, and gave us an invitation to his house at Ballyshyn, which we readily agreed to accept. We went up in the afternoon, and found that he had spread the invitation generally in the country, and that the use of a place fitted up for the Methodists was procured for the purpose. The meeting was largely attended, and I do not remember an opportunity of the kind in which more quietness prevailed among the people; and I have a hope that some were not insensible to serious impressions. Our kind friend, John Kain, would willingly have accommodated us with lodging as far as was in his power; but, not having room for all three, we agreed on returning to Kirk Michael. He is a Manxman, and by trade a farmer and tanner; he was living upon an estate which I think had been in his family for many generations. I don't suppose he had had the advantage of a liberal education; but he seemed to be a man of strong natural parts, to have read a pretty deal, and to possess a mind well-stored with general information, and withal serious and religiously disposed; and I heard that he sometimes officiated as a preacher among the Methodists. I left him some books, also some Testaments, as the Manx language is much spoken in that neighbourhood.

18th.—After some time passed in secret conflict, I ventured forward to Ramsey. Our road lay through a pleasant country, and my companions enjoyed their ride: generally speaking, the island is very barren of wood, and the plantations do not thrive so well as in Westmoreland and Cumberland; but on this side of the island ash timber seemed to thrive well, and to be of indigenous growth. Agriculture is much more attended to of later years. Some farmers out of the North of England have settled amongst them, and excited a spirit of improvement, much to their advantage. It is generally thought, that if the people could be prevailed upon to turn their attention to the cultivation of the soil, instead of depending upon the produce of the herring fishery, which, to say the best of it, is a much more precarious mode

of subsistence, their social and domestic comforts would be greatly increased, and a more settled way of life would pave the way to an improvement in morality and religion. The fishing, certainly, affords a lawful means of subsisteuce, and, were it rightly engaged in, might be considered as a temporal blessing to the inhabitants of the island; but sea-faring people are prone to an excessive use of spirituous liquors, and, when elated by success, or depressed by disappointment, are said to iudulge themselves in the use of them to a very affecting and shocking extreme. I felt deeply on this subject; for, though they were strangers, yet they were fellow-creatures, and fellow-objects of that great redemption which cometh through faith in the Lord Jesus; and, as opportunity presented, I expressed my concern to such as I supposed to be persons of influence, and capable of serious consideration; and I found that some means were in contemplation to check the spreading of the evil; but I doubted whether they were adequate to the exteut of the calamity.

The islanders consider themselves a privileged people. They are exempt from all taxes, except a mere trifle upon dogs and carriages (and I think there is a small demand upou some other conveniences), the revenue from which is appropriated to the repair of their roads; and there is a duty to a small amount upon goods imported, so that they have many of the conveuiences and luxuries of life at a very low rate. Spirituous liquors are one-third of the price that they are sold at in England, and wine, teas and sugars, considerably cheaper; they have no military impositions, but tithe is strictly exacted, and chiefly in kind. The people are generally civil, and there is a degree of courtesy in the lower class of the inhabitants very agreeable. The dress of the country people reminded me of the Welsh habit—the women mostly in blue cloaks, and some with black hats; the men are generally dressed in blue of their own homespun cloth; and the young men of most descriptions in the country wear the appearance of sailors. Many of the men wear the ancient sandal instead of shoes, and I did uot see many barefoot; they have plenty of children, for whom I felt very tenderly, and there are some

who have the cause of education at heart. There are no poor-rates; but the aged and infirm are supported by the kindness of their neighbours, and orphans are considered to be under the care of their nearest relations. The cottages, compared to the habitations of the poor in the South of England, are certainly mean; but they wear an appearance of comfort and plenty, which was very pleasant; they are mostly built of stone in the south part of the island, and in the north of turf, but in both parts neatly thatched, and bound down with bands made of straw: many degrees above the description we have of the Irish cabins. I met with few who could not understand English; the dialect of the natives is peculiar to themselves; it bears some resemblance to the Scotch and Irish, and is not unpleasant, but rather harmonious in my ear.

We were rather uncomfortably accommodated at Ramsey; but, I believe, all endeavoured to make the best of it. Our meeting in the Court-house was very large; and, as far as it related to myself, I think it was a favoured opportunity.

19th.—We set off in good time for Douglas, and stopped by the way at Laxey to bait our horses. Here we had solicitations to hold a meeting, and for a while my mind was considerably exercised on the subject; but, feeling very desirous of a meeting at Douglas that evening, and having a bad and rough road before us, it seemed almost impracticable to accomplish both objects; so that, although I felt very much for the people, before any of them had spoken to us, I thought it right to go on.

We had a large meeting, which I thought was owned by the presence of the Great Master, and I was assisted to labour much to the relief and confirmation of my own mind. In R. C. we find a kind and hospitable friend; he took us to his house in the evening, and would have us to dine next day. He is one of the most respectable tradesmen in the place, in connection with the Methodists, and much disposed to do good.

Believing that a release was now granted from that field of labour, I was glad to embrace the opportunity of the packet

for getting back to England. I was abased into a deeply humbling sense of my own unprofitableness, yet a hope was raised that we were leaving the way open for better qualified and more experienced labourers, whose lot it may be to follow us in a future day. My peace did not flow with a swelling tide, yet feeling clear of any weight of condemnation, I desired to labour after resignation to the disposal of Him to whom I wished to look as to my Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver. The revival of these three words, and the consideration of their import, brought some degree of tenderness over my spirit.

21st.—We went about nine o'clock to the pier. The night was dark, and about four in the morning a heavy gale came on from the south or south-west; about five we were off Manghold's Head, near Ramsey, and at eight were entering the harbour at Whitehaven. During the storm, which was part of the time rather violent, my mind was preserved in calmness. Sometimes I thought we were in danger, and marvelled that I felt so little agitation. I never felt so much of the awfulness of death, and think I was never more sensible of best support. We were met on the pier by Henry and Joseph Bragg, and went with William Miller to breakfast at his father's. I went to bed with a heart teeming with gratitude and praise.

CHAPTER XI.

JOURNEY IN THE NORTH CONTINUED.

CUMBERLAND, SOUTH AND WEST OF SCOTLAND.

On his return from the Isle of Man, William Forster at once resumed his work in Cumberland; and, in the evening of the day of his landing, he held a large meeting with the inhabitants of Whitehaven, "in which he endeavoured to preach what he thought was required of him." The next day he had a meeting at Egremont, and then proceeded to Pardshaw.

4th mo. 23rd.—I was at the Monthly Meeting at Pardshaw, a large body of Friends, where, for a short season, I was permitted to stand as upon Mount Pisgah; for I think I never had such clear views of the efficacy of the power of Christ in effecting the redemption of such as believe in and follow Him. I drank tea at James Graham's: I had a great desire to see him at his own house, and was pleased with the visit. He seems very cheerful and full of love, his conversation was instructive and edifying to me. Just before we parted, he made some mention of the mercies attendant upon his old age, in which I thought he evinced much tenderness and liveliness of spirit. It is pleasant and very encouraging to see young people dedicating the strength of their day to the service of the Lord, and to observe the middle-aged steadfastly bound to the same great cause; but I am never more comforted than when I think I can perceive that those who have been led along in the path of Christian obedience, are flourishing in their old age, bearing the precious fruits of meekness, humility, and brotherly love.

Jane Pearson, of Whitehaven, seems to me to be alive in the Truth; the evening that I drank tea with her she ministered in the exercise of her gift, and I thought it was from the spring of life.

John Hall's memory is precious among his friends; on the reading of the testimony respecting him, many seemed reminded of their loss, and it seemed to have a good effect on the meeting. His mother-in-law, Rachel Wigham, is now in an enfeebled state, advanced to her ninetieth year.

From Pardshaw he passed on to a number of small meetings towards the North, and along the coast. In seven days he held ten meetings, some of which were largely attended by the surrounding inhabitants. "Assisted" to preach "Christ and him crucified," he was "comforted in feeling the extension of compassionating mercy to them that return repenting." At Carlisle he was met by his former companion, George Jones, of Stockport, who had agreed to join him in some of his remaining services in the North.

After attending the usual meeting at Scotby, next morning they returned to Carlisle; and W. F. remarks:—

5th mo. 3rd.—We had a meeting with Friends there in the forenoon, where, to my own admiration, I thought some ability was granted to cast off a part of the burden with which my spirit had been heavily oppressed. Thus the spring of consolation was opened where I had least expected. I was strengthened to believe that access was granted to the holy footstool; and I thought I had faith to commit myself to the guidance and protection of the Heavenly Shepherd, humbly craving that He would be with us, and go before us through this land.

The two "border meetings" of Solport and Kirklington were the last William Forster attended in Cumberland, and, returning from these, he writes:—

5th mo. 5th.—In apprehending that my service in Cumberland was closed, at least for the present, I felt a revival of faith, which enabled me to decide upon appointing a meeting at Longtown for the next forenoon; in this my companion united, and after matters were put into a train, I spent as peaceful an evening as the circumstances attendant upon the prospect before us would allow.

We had some of the company of Thomas Bullman, a worthy Friend belonging to the meeting at Sikeside; he spent that afternoon with us, and I don't know that I was ever more sensible of help from the sympathy of a friend, than in his company. It is truly comforting to the poor traveller here and there to meet with such as can comprehend the nature of his exercises, and upon whose judgment and counsel he can place some reliance.

6th.—The meeting at Longtown was fully attended, I thought I felt that best help was near, and in the end rejoiced in a renewal of my strength. After this we set forwards towards Annan; I found that we could not very comfortably pass by Dornock without giving up to appoint a meeting. At first we had some little difficulty for want of suitable accommodation. We engaged with the landlord for the use of his parlour. The meeting was very much crowded, and ended to far more satisfaction than I had hoped for.

7th.—At Annan the Town-hall was readily obtained; the meeting was held in the forenoon, and fully attended. Many of the upper class of the people were there. I remember the opportunity with some degree of thankfulness, that I was assisted to bear my testimony to the love of God, in the Gospel of Christ. I thought that the feeling of good increased towards the conclusion.

8th.—In the morning I felt best satisfied to leave Dumfries, and go back to a village six miles on the road and try for a

meeting. We set off in pretty good time; but I was very low, and my discouragement was increased in meeting many coming to the market at Dumfries, that I was several times ready to turn back again, concluding we should find nobody at home. However, as the matter ended, we saw cause to be thankful that we went; there were a few people left at home, and they seemed glad of the opportunity. We were kindly taken in at the house of a gentleman, who was no stranger to that hospitality for which the Scotch are remarkable. On our return to Dumfries, I was a good deal cast down, but I did not find we could go forward without trying for a meeting. We obtained the use of an assembly-room; it was much smaller than we could have wished, but appeared to be the best accommodation that could be procured. It was a wet evening, and the notice was but thinly spread; yet the place was filled. For a while I was greatly discouraged; but a hand of help was extended, through tender compassionating mercy, in this hour of sore dismay; and I was assisted to labour, much to the confirmation and encouragement of my own mind. In meditating on the deliverance which I thought I could perceive had been wrought for me, my heart was secretly employed in thanksgiving and praise. I trust the meeting ended well. We discovered some serious people who were desirous of another opportunity; but I was glad to embrace an opening to proceed.

Passing along the southern extremity of Kirkcudbrightshire, they held satisfactory meetings at Castle-Douglas, and Kirkcudbright, where the Provost readily granted the Town-hall for the purpose, and at Gatehouse and Creetown. Thence they went on to Newton-Stewart, where they had a meeting in the Court-house. W. F. continues:—

12th.—We went on to Wigtown in the afternoon. Leaving the high road we got among a people who seemed to know very little about our Society. We obtained liberty for the

Court-house, and appointed a meeting for the next morning, which was large, and to me very laborious. G. J. and I took a walk into the country in the evening, and called at the house of a farmer apparently of great respectability, and informed him of the meeting. He seemed scarcely to have heard of our Society, and appeared quite ignorant respecting our principles; he asked for a few books, with which we supplied him. I heard that he was a person of eminence amongst the Seceders from the Scotch Church, and considered to be a man of learning.

13th.—Believing that we were at liberty to move forwards, we set out towards Whithorn. I think I was the better for seeking a religious opportunity with the family at the inn before we parted. Our landlady was a widow; and seemed no stranger to good impressions. Our next meeting was at Garlieston, a small town on the coast; it was held in the school-house.

14th.—We went to Whithorn in the morning, and had a large meeting in the forenoon. After dinner, we bent our course towards the coast, and that evening had a meeting at a small sea-port called the Isle of Whithorn. The people seemed great strangers to Friends. We obtained the use of a school-room for the meeting. It was a considerable time after the hour appointed before any came, but at last the room was pretty well crowded; some behaved seriously, and were attentive; but it is heavy work to plough a straight furrow on such hard ground.

15th.—In the morning we came to Port William, another small seaport. Here we readily obtained the use of a good school-room. Our meeting was in the forenoon, and well attended; the way appearing more prepared than at some other places. We left some books with them, which, as at most other places, were cordially accepted, the people generally wishing to pay for them. We came forward to Glenluce; the afternoon was fine, and the prospects over the Bay of Luce were grand. We stopped at a small public-house about three miles short of our journey's end, kept by a blacksmith, quite in a country spot; there were very few houses in sight,

but I felt best satisfied to attempt a meeting, the innkeeper readily accommodating us with a good-sized room. Notice was spread over the neighbourhood, yet but few came. However, a table was spread for us in the wilderness; at least I was comforted and refreshed. Our landlord had long been in a poor state of health; he seemed serious and tender in spirit, and I was thankful it was in our power to minister a little to their outward necessities. The remainder of our journey to Glenluce was pleasant and peaceful.

16th.—In the forenoon we had a meeting in a large room at our inn, to my satisfaction and encouragement. That which we account supremely good was, according to my judgment, uppermost, and I was made a partaker in those consolations which gladden the heart of the feeble believer. After dinner we set forward again, I trust with a sincere desire for best direction; and after some exercise of mind we were united in apprehension that it was the better way to take the road leading to the opposite side of the bay. I felt easy as we went along, and my companions were pleasant and cheerful. Our first meeting in this country was at Sandhead, a small village on the shore, held in a room upstairs—not very large, nor very relieving. Our landlord, a clever young man, just when we were about going to bed, wanted some conversation with us about our principles, particularly on Baptism and the Supper. As we endeavoured to explain our views on these subjects he seemed surprised, but did not make much objection; he then turned to their favourite point of Calvinistic doctrine on election, &c. He seemed more moderate than many, and desirous of information. I read him that chapter in "Beaven's Essay towards the Restoration," &c., which treats particularly on this subject, with which he seemed satisfied.

17th.—We went on to Dromore, nine miles further, and about four or five from the Mull of Galloway; we found the people were very generally gone to a fair at Stranraer, which discouraged us from attempting a meeting that forenoon; but we made preparation for one the next forenoon. In the afternoon we went about four miles to a village called

Portnessock, on the opposite shore of this promontory, and inquiring for suitable accommodation for a meeting, obtained the loan of the school-room, with which we were hardly satisfied at first, on account of its being upwards of a mile from the village; but, notice being given as extensively as time would admit, we had a large meeting; it was quiet, and to some satisfaction. Here we met with a young man, tutor in a gentleman's family in the neighbourhood, who was desirous of some conversation, and went with us down into the village; he seemed serious, and, I thought, had less prejudice to contend with than many. He told me that he had received an education to prepare him to officiate as a minister, and was waiting for a situation,—that his opinions accorded much with what he had heard; but he seemed afraid to avow them. I gave him a few books, which he readily received; and, when we met with him again next day, he told G. J. that he was satisfied with what he had read respecting Baptism and the Supper.

18th.—We returned to Dromore, and had, considering the country is but thinly inhabited, a large, and I think it may be said, a solid meeting. We were comfortably accommodated at a public-house in the neighbourhood; the landlady was a kind and religiously-disposed woman, and I have met with few persons in Scotland with whom I have been better pleased. Our meeting was much increased in number by some sailors and ship carpenters, engaged in repairing a vessel which floated into the bay about six months ago, without any hands on board. We came forward about six miles to a place called Chapelrossin, where it seemed best to make a halt; and whilst G. J. went to Stoneykirk to prepare a meeting for the next day, J. P. and I stayed to make ready for a meeting in that neighbourhood for the same evening. We got a small barn, which was pretty well filled; Colonel MacDoual and his wife, the tutor, and some others of the family came. The colonel very kindly urged our going to lodge at their house; but we were better satisfied in coming on to Sandhead, as G. J. had spoken for beds.

19th.—In the forenoon we had an opportunity of retirement in our chamber, where I felt some capacity to seek after

a morsel for my support. The meeting at Stoneykirk in the evening was not so satisfactory as some we had attended in that country, but there was more seriousness towards the close. We came to Stranraer that night.

20th.—In the morning we had a meeting in the school-room, very insufficient for a general invitation, as it is a very populous place.

Ballantrae.—My thoughts have been frequently directed towards London, and in the course of the day I have saluted one and another, whom I suppose to be assembled there at the Yearly Meeting, in much of the feeling of brotherly love; and if I may venture to say so much, a desire has prevailed that the work may prosper in their hands, and that the body may edify itself in love, under and through the fresh extension of divine regard. I consider it as a favour worthy to be highly esteemed that I think of home, and the various privations attendant on my present allotment, without a wish to be elsewhere, or I could almost say, to be differently circumstanced in any respect. At the present moment I am favoured with rather an unusual degree of tranquillity and quiet as to the past, and unanxious respecting the future; so that, dreary as my path sometimes seems to be, I am not without my consolations; and what purer blessing can an unworthy disciple of a glorified Redeemer possibly enjoy, than to believe he is favoured with some degree of capacity to look towards the holy Throne, and silently breathe the language, "Thy will be done?" Oh! for deeper humility, and a more constant enjoyment of true resignation.

21st.—We came on through Girvan and Maybole to Ayr. This was a long day's journey of thirty-six miles, part of the way along a mountainous road.

22nd.—We had a meeting at Ayr in the morning; it was held in the Court House, which was well filled, and in my apprehension it was an opportunity worthy to be remembered with gratitude. Many who were there behaved seriously, and some wished for another meeting; but I was glad that we were at liberty to proceed. There was a Methodist preacher, who strongly solicited our accepting of their meeting-house.

Ayr is a large, populous town, situate at the opening of a fine fertile valley; vegetation seems to be nearly as forward as in the neighbourhood of London; hawthorn and laburnum in bloom, and in one place I observed the apple blossom dying away. We came that afternoon to Kilmarnock.

23rd.—We appointed a meeting the next forenoon; it was very small, but to some satisfaction. Not feeling ourselves fully relieved, after some conflict on my part, we had another meeting at seven in the evening; it was somewhat larger, and I trust we were not detained for naught.

25th.—We came on the next day to Glasgow, twenty-two miles, but did not reach the town before three in the afternoon. This day was pretty much a day of rest to the body, but occasionally a time of great thoughtfulness to the mind; the retrospect of some of our most trying and discouraging opportunities seems to lead my mind to a settlement in this,—that so far as we are patiently devoted to suffer for the cause of Christ, we are accepted as his disciples. But, alas! in this most desirable attainment of patience and meekness under suffering, I find a daily deficiency. I sometimes think of dear Samuel Emlen's dying petition, and now and then have faith to adopt it: "My God, grant me patience, humble, depending patience."

26th.—The meetings at Glasgow were larger than I had expected to see, particularly that in the evening, although I believe no public notice was given; I had comfort in believing there were those among the few who have joined our Society in that city, who are seeking an establishment on the true foundation, and there seems a probability that their numbers may yet be increased.

CHAPTER XII.

JOURNEY IN THE NORTH CONCLUDED.

WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND, ETC.

William Forster and his companion did not tarry long at Glasgow; but proceeded to some of the islands to the west of Scotland. Holding meetings on their way for the inhabitants of Renfrew, Port Glasgow, and Greenock, they crossed over to Bute. The day after landing, William Forster writes at Rothsay:—

5th mo. 31st.—We had a meeting at twelve o'clock in a large room, to which several of the respectable inhabitants came; it was to me a much more satisfactory opportunity than I had expected. Wishing for larger accommodation for a meeting in the evening, we obtained the use of a school-room, which was considerably crowded; and, excepting some children who were restless, the meeting was quiet, and to me encouraging.

6th mo. 1st.—We walked over to Port Bannatyne, a village about three miles towards the north end of the island, and in the evening had a meeting in a large room, which, at one time, was used as a meeting-place for some Dissenters; we met with some serious people, and were satisfied with our visit.

2nd.—On our return to Rothsay, we found the people very desirous of a meeting, but nobody could help us to a larger place than we had had. I was long before I could see that it was our duty to attempt a meeting out of doors; but, towards the afternoon, apprehending that we should not be clear without seeking an opportunity with the people, more generally than we had obtained, and finding the weather to

brighten, a meeting was appointed to begin at six o'clock; a sheltered situation about a quarter of a mile out of town, just on the sea-shore, was fixed upon; the people gathered to a considerable multitude, and behaved with great propriety, perhaps there were not fewer than 1,000 or 1,200; the population of Rothsay is said to be about 4,000.

3rd.—I believed it best to appoint another meeting for ten o'clock in the morning; it was small, but encouraging to me. On returning to our lodgings my mind was unusually exercised. I thought I could not see the way clear to leave the town, and, having already had four meetings among the people, I was afraid to think of another; but, feeling my concern to continue, I ventured to inform my companions how I was situated; they kindly encouraged the appointment of another meeting, which was fixed on for seven o'clock, and held in the school-house. The evening was wet, and the meeting but small; yet best help was again extended, and I think we saw a few fresh faces. Towards the close I felt more relieved, and was assisted, in reverent prostration of spirit, to commit the great work into the hands of Him who had enabled us to bear our feeble testimony to his mercy and power among the inhabitants of that town.

4th.—We had a very stormy walk to Kerrycroy, and had a meeting there in the forenoon; it was small, but confirming to my mind.

5th.—The weather continued stormy, and the wind was unfavourable for our proceeding to the Isle of Arran. I was desirous of discovering whether there was anything further for us to attend to, and feeling the revival of a concern for a meeting with the inhabitants of a parish towards the south end of the island, I mentioned it to my companions, who kindly encouraged our going to Kilchatten that afternoon; the meeting was but small, yet I was satisfied that we went, and afterwards felt easy and peaceful in looking towards leaving the island. G. J. rode, and J. P. and myself had a pleasant walk, particularly on our return, part of the way through the plantations contiguous to Mount Stewart, a large house belonging to the Marquis of Bute.

Having succeeded in crossing over to Arran, he continues :—

6th.—The wind, which had blown for several days in a contrary direction, in the morning turned round in our favour, and we set sail in a wherry belonging to the inn, and under the care of one of the young men. We had a pleasant breeze, till just as we got abreast of the south end of the island, and then it fell away almost to a dead calm ; but, as we drew near to the coast of Arran, a fresh gale sprang up from off the shore, which drove us again out to sea, and in the course of a short time increased to a heavy storm of wind, accompanied by rain. The sea rose very rapidly, and ran with a great swell ; the prospect, which an hour or two before had been bright and pleasant, became gloomy and awful, and to us there was the appearance of considerable danger. Our pilot gave up his intention of taking us to Brodick, the port we had in view, and ran back with the wind to a small port called Corry, where we were landed without much difficulty just as the storm began to abate. We had been on the water about five hours, and the distance is reckoned near twenty miles ; we soon found our way to a small public-house, at which we met with poor accommodation, but our landlady did her best, and soon made us up a fire to dry our clothes. After we had been refreshed, and talked over our deliverance, I trust with hearts replete with humble gratitude, we set off and walked along the shore, a very rough and rocky path which they call a road, to Brodick, where we found a very comfortable inn ; a good night's rest set us up again.

7th.—We appointed a meeting in the evening in a room at the inn, which was fully attended, and to me it was satisfactory and encouraging. I took a walk out in the middle of the day, and met with some civil and well-disposed people ; the inhabitants were just then very busy in their fields. They considered themselves much behindhand with their husbandry in consequence of the spring and summer having been so unusually wet ; some of them had suffered much by a violent torrent of rain, which had poured down from the mountain

and washed away their grain and potatoes just after they were sown; one woman spoke of her loss with the appearance of much resignation.

8th.—In the forenoon we went back to Corry, and had a meeting in a room at the public-house; some serious people attended—they seemed to be great strangers to our principles. One poor man stopped a while after meeting, and conversed with us in great simplicity; as some matters were explained to him, he seemed to understand our views better than I should have expected. Just before he went away he put his hand into his pocket, and with the appearance of much cordiality and sincerity offered me a shilling; at first he seemed concerned that I could not accept his kindness, but I thought he became better satisfied before we parted. I was much affected with the tenderness which his conversation manifested, and was very desirous we might be preserved from wounding him in any way. We lodged at Corry that night.

9th.—We had a meeting at Sanax, two miles further North, in a meeting-house belonging to a society of Scotch Dissenters. Here we met with several serious people. The solidity of their countenances, and the appearance of devout religious zeal, confirmed my apprehension that there were some not far from the kingdom. Several were but little acquainted with English, but I believe there were others who could understand pretty well what was said; their pastor, a well-informed young man, who lives at the house where the meeting is held, walked with us back to Corry; he seemed desirous of information on some subjects on which we differ from other religious societies, which I endeavoured to give him as well as I could; his inquiries were principally relating to Baptism and the Supper, meetings for worship and the ministry; we gave him some books, with which he seemed well pleased. We returned that night to our old quarters at Brodick.

The next day they had a meeting at Lamlash, in a school-house, kindly offered by the "kirk minister" of Kilbride, and the day following one was held in a

large room in Whiting Bay. "Here," William Forster says, "we found clean and pleasant accommodation in a very poor house; so much so, that we might have fancied ourselves in England."

12th.—In the morning, believing it right to request to have the family gathered together, we had an opportunity among them before we parted, in which, as I endeavoured to do my best, I had peace. We continued our course that day towards the south end of the island, baited at a small house near the ruins of Kildonnan Castle, which I think out-topped every place I had seen on the island for filthiness and wretchedness. It was well for us that we had some articles of our own. The poor woman was very kind, and did her best. She had a lot of fine healthy children, who seemed to be in the way of making hardy Highlanders. On our stopping at Lagg, the place we had in view, we did not find ourselves better off in some respects: this was trying to my dear companion; but, my health being better than his, I was not so much affected by the wretchedness of our accommodation. We got through the night better than might be expected. I was poorly and discouraged in the evening, but kept in a good degree of resignation. On making some inquiry respecting a place to hold a meeting in, we heard of a school-house in the neighbourhood, for which we found that application must be made to the minister of the parish at Kilmorie, about a mile distant. We went and found him very civil. He readily granted our request, appeared sociable, and desirous of obtaining some information respecting our Society. We gave him some books, which he promised to lend among his neighbours. He seemed liberal in his views, and zealously devoted to promote the religious welfare of the inhabitants of that part of the island. His wife appeared an agreeable woman. They invited us to take up our quarters under their roof, but we doubted whether it would be suitable. We called on them after meeting, and again next morning. The meeting in the school-house was long in gathering, but we had the company of some who appeared glad of the opportunity.

13th.—We set off in the forenoon under some discouragement for want of a horse to carry our luggage, but we had not gone more than a mile before we found one. George mounted the pony, and we got along pretty well. At the village where we were accommodated, whilst they were packing the luggage, I went into a farm-house and found an old man, father to the farmer, reading the Bible. He seemed very hard of hearing, but thankful that his sight was preserved, for he had great comfort in reading; and I thought he was religiously exercised, that he might be prepared for his latter end. He made many inquiries respecting our travels, and, amongst other things, whether we made collections among the people, or received any remuneration. Upon my explaining our principles and practice respecting these things, he very heartily said, "I commend you for that." He told me he was in his eighty-sixth year. I found he was considered an elder in the church, and a sober, respectable man. There was something attending that short interview with the old man rather encouraging to me. The minister at Kilbride gave us a note to a brother-in-law, who lived in our way about four or five miles from Lagg, where he thought they would be glad to give us some refreshment. The good man of the house was not at home when we called, but the kindness and hospitality of his wife were highly gratifying. As soon as she was aware of our object in stopping, she set to work and made some bread, which was prepared and baked in little more than a quarter of an hour. She soon brought us a large bowl full of broth, and after that as much fresh curds and whey, and all with as much hospitality as if we had been near relations. Just as we had finished her husband came in; he seemed a generous, open-hearted Highlander, and we found he was considered a principal farmer in that country. We had a pleasant walk about six miles further, and found that George had got into clean and comfortable quarters, with which he seemed quite cheered: we all enjoyed the contrast, and, after appointing a meeting for the next day, rested comfortably the remainder of the evening.

14th.—The meeting was held at the public-house, to my

refreshment and encouragement. A meeting was appointed in a school-house in an adjoining village. It was a quiet and a satisfactory one. I called in at two houses after meeting, and found the people very kind and friendly.

16th.—In the forenoon we attended a meeting at Machre, about four miles distant, but bad travelling through bogs and bourns (small rivers). In the evening I proposed taking a walk to a small village about two miles distant. We found our way without much difficulty to a farm-house, where we were kindly received. After we had been there for a while the farmer came home; he had been at the kirk at Kilmore, I think not much short of nine miles distant. When we mentioned our inclination for a meeting among his neighbours, he kindly offered his house for the purpose, and soon sent word to the people, who came pretty directly. Most of the men seemed to understand English, and I think the meeting was as lively and satisfactory as any we had on the island. There was something about this man which pleased me very much: he did not say a great deal, but appeared to me to be alive to his own best interest, and that of his children. His wife, sister to the wife of the minister at Kilmore, had a good countenance, and her solid demeanour in the meeting was very striking. This house, like most others that we were in on the island, was very bare of furniture; they had but few seats, and I was rather pleased in seeing how contentedly the women sat down on the floor, which I was told is often the case when meetings are held among them out of doors.

I was much pleased with what I saw of the inhabitants of this island,—they are generally of the ancient stock of Highlanders; I did not meet with an Englishman, and the present situation of the country holds out but little encouragement to the Lowlanders to settle among them. I could not find that there were any possessed of much wealth, and but few in a state of abject poverty; indeed, the means of acquiring riches are limited within a very narrow compass, and their only articles of export are a few black cattle, some sheep, and whiskey in a clandestine way. Excepting a very small proportion, the whole island belongs to the Duke of Hamilton.

Some of the farmers I was told are possessed of a little money, but their herds and flocks compose the principal part of their property. When a young woman marries, half a dozen of their small kine is considered a handsome portion. There is no town or large village on the island; the people generally live on farms or in small villages, containing from twelve to thirty or forty houses, and in many of these they have a school, so that the education of their young people is well provided for. They seemed strangers to most of the luxuries of life, and but little acquainted with many of our conveniences and comforts. I saw but two apple-trees, and no other kind of fruit-trees, except the elder, which seemed to be the largest tree of indigenous growth. The island is very mountainous, particularly towards the north; the top of Goatfell, which is the highest, is singularly rocky and rugged; I saw a memorandum on a window at Brodick, which I copied—"Height of Goatfell, measured by the barometer, August 30th, 1775, 2,850 feet." From the little opportunity I had of forming an opinion, I thought them to be generally possessed of strong natural parts, and, considering their insulated situation, to have acquired a pretty large fund of general information. They have so much confidence in one another, that I was told they seldom bar their doors at night, and seem to have no fear of leaving their property abroad. There is no prison upon the island, and, from what we could learn, it is a very rare thing for a person to be convicted of a crime. I was told that the minister in one of the parishes (Kilmorie) is very assiduous in helping them to compose their differences. By an enumeration just made the island contains about 6000 inhabitants. I thought I could perceive many valuable traits of character in those I conversed with, but nothing appeared more conspicuous to me than their zeal in religion. Many go nine or ten miles to their place for worship, and I was told that some of them in winter will go *sixteen or eighteen* through considerable difficulties. In the most stormy weather in winter the kirk is generally full. A young man in the family where we stayed two or three days at Sheskin went off early on First-day morning to the kirk at Kilmorie, and did not return till about

eight in the evening; and his mother told me he would have no refreshment in the interim, but a bit of oat bread he would take in his pocket. They are remarkably well acquainted with the Scriptures. In some places I heard the Friends who visited the island fifteen years ago spoken of with respect and esteem.

Having completed their service in the Isle of Arran, they were ferried over to Cantire, and W. F.'s memoranda proceed :—

17th.—We were stirring about three o'clock in the morning, and had a pleasant walk to Mackie ; it was a fine quiet morning, and we got along pretty well; the ferryman had through mistake told us to be there two hours at least before the tide would serve. During our detention I had opportunity of further inquiry how far I was at liberty to go, and though I could not feel all the clearness that would have been satisfactory, yet, considering my companion's health, and his evident desire to go, I believed it best for me to give up the apprehension I had entertained of a requiring to visit some part of the shore to the N.W. The water was calm when we went on board, and, if I had been in a state to enjoy it, it would have been for the most part a pleasant passage; but my mind was very low. At last I thought I felt some ability to confide in Divine Omnipotence: this brought peace, and then I could be tolerably cheerful. I never remember the time in which I saw the same necessity of living every day as if it were to be my last, than since I came into this land. I often feel myself as a sojourner in a probationary state of being, and sometimes am sensible of earnest desire that my exercises and trials may be sanctified, and prepare me for confidence in divine mercy, whenever it may please Him who hath all things at his own disposal to call me hence. I often look towards home with much tenderness of filial and brotherly affection, but for the most part I am preserved in quietness and resignation without a wish to be elswhere. We were about two and a half hours on the water, and were rowed over most of the

way. We got ashore at a small port called Torasdale; it was about half-past ten when we landed; the morning was fine, and the country delightfully pleasant. We reached Campbeltown about half-past five o'clock—thirteen miles.

18th.—I was tolerably brisk in the morning. We had a crowded meeting in the Town-hall in the evening, which I thought a favoured opportunity.

20th.—Our detention in Campbeltown in consequence of G. J.'s illness, gave me a fair opportunity to recruit. Indeed it was remarkable to me how my health and strength were preserved; for, although our diet and other accommodation were very different from what I had met with in my former travels, yet I cannot say that I suffered any material inconvenience. We met with plenty of good milk, excellent potatoes, and abundance of eggs, and generally good fresh butter, sometimes fish, and now and then a little salt meat; very often barley broth. Spirits, to my sorrow be it spoken, are plentifully made and plentifully drunk.

22nd.—I thought we should hardly leave the place without making some further efforts to obtain another meeting. The Town-hall was occupied by the officers of the local militia, and, although we made considerable inquiry, we could meet with no other accommodation except out of doors; a large green enclosed by a high wall, and adjoining one of their places of worship, was proposed to us, and it appeared the most eligible place. There we had a meeting in the forenoon, not very large, but to more purpose than I expected. I had thought of our trying to get a stage that afternoon; but, believing upon further consideration it was best for us to stay over First-day, a meeting was appointed at the same place for the following evening, and J. P. went over to a village about four miles distant, to appoint a meeting for the next morning. We took tea that evening at the house of a family removed out of Cumberland, and settled in the neighbourhood of Campbeltown; they were very kind, and seemed desirous of our company.

23rd.—The meeting in the morning was fully attended. I had comfort in believing that some who attended were

sensible of the prevalence of a true solemnity. We returned to the town pretty directly after meeting, and took tea at the house of a respectable aged widow, whose company was pleasant to me. The meeting in the evening was held in the same place as before; many attended, and several of the soldiers came toward the close. I trust we did not meet in vain.

24th.—I now thought we were at liberty to set our faces northwards, and my dear companion seemed to be in strength and spirits equal to the journey. I can look back with some satisfaction to our detention in that town; for, although I then had, and still have, a very humbling sense of the little that we did towards the advancement of the great cause, yet I trust no harm was done by the intercourse we had with a few inhabitants of that place. Our Society seemed to be but very little known, but generally esteemed for the respectability of its moral character. We received many marks of kindness from one of the magistrates of the town, to whom we gave several books, and before we left he told us he was quite satisfied respecting our objection to the use of water-baptism; this is one of the grand objections to our Society amongst the zealous professors of this land. I was glad of the opportunity of distributing books to several other persons, all of whom received them respectfully. I found some who remembered Samuel Rundell's visit; but John Pemberton's name and character seemed to be held in veneration, even by those who were born since he was in Scotland. I met with some young people who spoke of him in terms remarkably respectful; they seem to have been made acquainted with his character by the family of Campbell, where he stayed several days, towards the southern extremity of the Cantire. Speaking of his dedication, and the circumstances attending his death* in a foreign land, &c., seemed to have a good effect on one young man who, although in appearance the gayest in the town, did not seem ashamed of our company. He

* John Pemberton died at Pyrmont, Germany, while on a religious visit to those parts, in 1795. See his "Life and Travels," by W. H., jun.

walked with me to breakfast at the house of a respectable gentleman, a manufacturer, about two miles out of town, who had noticed us the evening before, and introduced us at his brother's, where we were received with great appearance of courtesy. He had been at all the meetings we had appointed, and seemed a serious man; we were entertained with great hospitality. In the course of our conversation he evinced a desire to be acquainted with the grounds of our dissent from most other religious professors. We did our best in replying to his inquiries; on some subjects he seemed satisfied, and I thought him a man of more enlightened judgment than many we had met with. He was surprised and pleased on hearing of the order of the discipline, and the care that was exercised respecting the ministry,—on the latter subject he had heard strange reports. He saw our certificates, which seemed to give satisfaction both to himself and the young persons who, I supposed, were invited to meet us.

The forenoon was considerably spent before we left. We baited at Ban, and as we were just setting off, a gentleman, Colonel MacAllister, came to ask us to take a walk in his grounds, and would hardly accept a refusal. We met his wife in the garden, who, upon some little acquaintance, seemed an agreeable young woman, and had been at a meeting or more in Morayshire. They repeatedly invited us into the house, but we could not stay. I found they had heard of our detention at Campbeltown. We reached Tayinlaan to tea. I had felt some concern for three or four days to attempt a visit to the small island of Gigha; and, believing that we had time to cross that evening, I was inclined to make the effort. The evening looked unfavourable, but I could not feel easy to delay as my companions were willing to go; we crossed in about thirty-five minutes, six miles,—quite wind enough for an open boat. We had a pretty long way to walk before we reached the public-house, a poor dirty spot; but after a while we got something for supper, and managed to get through the night as well as at some other times.

25th.—James and I found some difficulty in obtaining suitable accommodation for a meeting, but at last we got a small

barn; he gave notice in one direction, and I took another. Everything relating to us seemed so strange to the people, that it was trying work to get along amongst them. The meeting was small, but we thought we could feel something that compensated for the difficulties and discouragements of the day. The evening was very fine, and I was desirous of getting back again that night. After some persuasion the ferrymen consented to take us. The water was remarkably smooth, and I was favoured with an unusual degree of tranquillity. The Saviour's words, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," were sweetly revived in my remembrance; and I had faith to lay hold upon the assurance. What a favour, that one so unworthy should be permitted to draw consolation from such a sacred source!

William Forster had a strong desire to visit Islay; but the continued illness of George Jones, and the slighter indisposition of his other companion, prevented that object from being carried out. They reluctantly bent their course towards Inverary, and had two meetings on their way—on the "neck of land, between Loch Swin and the Sound of Jura;" one "upon the rocks about half a mile from the shore," the other "just on the borders of the loch, in a very beautiful situation, on a fine turf, under the shelter of some lofty rocks," both "favoured opportunities." With this record, the account of their joint labours comes to an abrupt close.

The state of George Jones's health not allowing him to continue the journey, he thought it best to return home. William Forster pursued his labours in this engagement nearly six months longer; but very few particulars have been found respecting them. After waiting some days at Inverary (James

Phillips, his other kind helper, being also released from further service), he was joined by Thomas Stordy, from Cumberland, and Alexander Cruickshanks, from Edinburgh. They proceeded together into the northern parts of Argyleshire, to the Isle of Mull, and thence by Fort William to Inverness, a journey which occupied nearly a fortnight, and during which several satisfactory meetings were held, both in the island and on the main land. Alexander Cruickshanks being now obliged to return home, William Forster, accompanied only by his "faithful help-meet, Thomas Stordy," went forward, "through a very mountainous country, to the head of Loch Ewe, where they took shipping to the Isle of Lewis, never before visited by Friends." They spent five days at Stornoway, the principal town, and held four large meetings with the inhabitants, "to their own satisfaction." Leaving the island, they had several meetings on the east coast of Ross-shire; and on their return to Inverness William Forster was pleased to find that "his beloved friend, George Sanders, accompanied by Anthony Wigham, had arrived a few hours before." They held a large meeting with the inhabitants of the town, and, having "parted with his dear friend Thomas Stordy," William Forster and his new companions went forward together along the north-east coast, holding large meetings in most of the principal towns in their way, by Nairn, Elgin, Macduff, Peterhead, Old Meldrum, and Kinmuck, to Aberdeen, which place they reached on the 12th of the Ninth Month. Here William Forster was laid by several days through indisposition. When so far recovered as to render travelling practicable, they proceeded by Cupar,

Perth and Stirling, to Edinburgh, again holding meetings with the inhabitants of most of the chief towns through which they had to pass. They spent nearly a week in the latter city, in visiting the families of Friends, and in other religious services, which "tended more to William Forster's peace than he could have dared to hope for."

Leaving Edinburgh on the 7th of Tenth Month, they "had many meetings as they came along through the South of Scotland. They were mostly large and satisfactory; the message of the gospel of Christ, and the power of his redeeming love, were often proclaimed; and, with reverent gratitude, the acknowledgment was made, that strength equal to the day was mercifully afforded." On leaving Scotland, William Forster appears to have visited and appointed many meetings in Cumberland and Northumberland, in Durham, Yorkshire, and other counties, which lay in his homeward journey. One of the last of these was held at Potton, Sussex, in reference to which he says:—

> The meeting was held in a barn fitted up for the accommodation of some of the more serious and zealous of the Church of England, for the purpose of meeting together on the evenings of week days. Their minister granted the use of it; he and his wife were there; he appeared to be a humble and pious man, clothed with the spirit of Christian charity. He made the acknowledgment, that the first serious impressions he received were at a Friends' meeting, supposed to be the Northern Yearly Meeting, forty years ago, in Cheshire.

On the next evening, the 3rd of First Month, 1812, the day before he reached home, he had a meeting with the inhabitants of Baldock.

This [he remarks] was the winding up of my public labours in this late journey; they were not in the feeling of triumph, or great gladness of heart; for I was just then weak in body and poor in spirit; but not so much so as to deprive me of a capacity to commemorate the mercies which had followed me in my going forth, which had been so richly bestowed in a distant land, and which, in unmerited kindness were continued even to the end.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOME; AND RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENTS IN HIS OWN QUARTERLY MEETING; AND IN THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES OF ENGLAND.

After his return from his long journey in the North, William Forster was permitted to partake in the cherished retirement of home and those comforts and enjoyments which he was so well able to appreciate. With grateful feelings of this kind, and a heart tenderly alive to the claims of Christian friendship, he not long afterwards writes :—

To ———.

1812. *First Month 27th.*—It is now upwards of three weeks since I was favoured to take my place once more in my father's family; and thou wilt easily suppose that, after more than thirteen months' absence, it was no small comfort to find my dear parents and a large circle of brothers and sisters, not only in as good a state of health as when I left home, but prepared to give me a cordial welcome.

It is a favour to be permitted for a while quietly to retire from the field of Gospel labour, and to feel a disposition, in cheerful resignation, to surrender the weapons for this warfare, which, in marvellous condescension, are intrusted to a very poor servant. Although I enjoy this little respite, and desire to prize and to improve the privilege, yet I do not forget those who are still labouring in the work of the Lord, who in patient and faithful dedication are exercised in following the Lamb.

If the small portion of experience that I have had in this work answer no other purpose, I think it has prepared me to enter into deeper feeling with the baptised and devoted servants of Christ. Much do I desire that He who has

hitherto prepared the way and granted preciously confirming evidence of his approbation and support, may continue to guide by his counsel, and to guard by his holy protecting arm of divine power.

I think I have some sense of the baptisms of spirit, the trials of faith, and the various discouragements by which thy mind is often proved: here I trust I am permitted to visit thee even in the fellowship of suffering. It is an honour to partake even in a small measure of the tribulations of the Gospel, especially when we consider for whose sake it is that we are called to suffer. And if there be no other reward (and greater I verily believe there is, yea, infinitely transcendent enjoyment), the sweet and precious fellowship in which the patiently dedicated followers are permitted to participate as a brook by the way, is enough to encourage us to hope that all these things are not in vain.

A month later we find the following :—

2nd mo. 26th.—On my return home I was favoured to feel as complete a relief from religious exercise on account of others, and as full liberty to partake in the enjoyment of social and domestic comforts, as I remember to have been the case at any time within the last four years. I was somewhat like a soldier on a few days' furlough after a long continental campaign, with this difference, that I was seldom inclined to recur to the sufferings and privations which had been permitted, and sometimes humbled in astonishment and self-abasement in considering the object I had been pursuing during this long absence.

The exercised traveller, in taking a retrospect of his experience in the path of Gospel labour, will often find as much that calls for the tribute of gratitude and praise in recurring to seasons of patient suffering, as to those in which, under the prevalence of divine love and life, his cup may have been made to overflow with the language of invitation and encouragement to brethren and sisters.

I often look back upon myself as a novice in the work, a

child in the family, and am sometimes afraid to say that I have had any experience at all. But I have always found that a dark night has been succeeded by a bright day; that in proportion as I have been made willing to descend into baptism unto death, I have been made to rejoice in Him who is the resurrrection and the life.

The proposal at our last Monthly Meeting was quietly received, and since I laid myself open to my friends I do not know that I have ever called in question the rectitude of the movement.

This proposal had reference to a religious visit which he contemplated to the families of Friends in Devonshire-house Monthly Meeting, and to persons in the station of servants, clerks, and apprentices, in the other Monthly Meetings in London. This interesting service occupied him several months, but no particulars respecting it are preserved.

In the course of the summer he again left home in the service of the Gospel in some of the southern counties. On the 18th of Seventh Month he writes at Chantry, near Storrington, Sussex:—

After several days of almost unremitting exercise of body and mind, I have the privilege of resting quietly at the house of a kind friend. I enjoy the relaxation, and wish to improve it to the renewal of my outward strength, and in seeking after an increase of faith and patient submission to that divine power to which I am sometimes engaged to bear my feeble testimony as all-sufficient to purify the soul, to detach our affections from perishable objects, and permanently to fix them on those things which are eternal. I desire to obtain some spiritual advantage, at least as much as it may please the great Master to afford me.

After having joined some other Friends in a religious visit to the families of Alton Meeting, he came

to Godalming, and writes from thence on the 20th of Seventh Month, to a Friend under trial :—

Some meetings were appointed on my account; I think I have discovered cause for gratitude that I was helped to put my trust in the Lord, and brought into a state of resignation to labour in the degree of faith which was sometimes afforded. I think I never felt such kind of service to be more awful than of later time; and yet it seems that my principal concern in this journey, and in the prospect of future service, is for the people at large.

It rests with me as a little debt of love simply to express my feeling with thee under the afflictive dispensation by which thou hast been bereaved of thy dear sister. As I cannot doubt that thou hast been drawn under heavenly influence to look to the Lord in this time of trial, that thou hast seen that his hand was in the event,—that He has done it; so in thy sorrow thou hast seen the source of healing consolation opened for thy support and strength.

I need not say much of my persuasion, that the tender mercies of our Heavenly Father are and will continue to be over thee for good; that, though He appoint thee a solitary path through the residue of thy pilgrimage, yet that He will undertake for thee, uphold thee by his arm, and give thee from one time to another so to enjoy a cheering sense of his divine presence, as yet more fully to confirm thee in the assurance, that in seeking and serving Him thou hast followed no cunningly devised fable; that thou hast been so building upon the Rock, that neither the winds nor the floods shall be permitted to move thee.

I think I have felt encouragement for thee to hold fast that which thou hast felt to be an anchor sure and steadfast, and still to hope in Him, who, when thy own measure shall be accomplished, will bring thee in safety to the port thou hast long had in view.

I have sometimes thought that our afflictions are seasons in which the love of our Heavenly Father is evidently displayed, in which we are taken more entirely into his hands, and

brought to more abundant enjoyment in his presence, and thus the seal of adoption is more fully confirmed to us. If it please the Lord to render our sorrows the days of such divine blessing, when we shall have put off mortality, and through divine favour shall be clothed upon with immortality; then, in our retrospect upon the path by which we have been led through time, we shall doubtless find abundant cause to acknowledge that these have been amongst the best of his blessings, that they are more to be valued even than days of temporal and spiritual prosperity.

But in our present state we see and feel as those that are in the body. In our most advanced state we are still but men. As such, whatever be our experience in the Christian's warfare, and in the Christian's victory, we need the sympathy and help, and even the prayers, of our fellow-pilgrims in the same state of probation.

In the course of his journey in Sussex, his health gave way, and he was obliged to return home to recruit. To this he alludes in the following extract from a letter to his beloved friend Stephen Grellet, then on a religious visit to England :—

8th mo. 22nd.—I left home in my late journey into Hampshire, Sussex, &c., on the evening of our last Quarterly Meeting. I was at meetings at several places where it was thought Friends were but little known. The engagement was arduous, and I was sometimes almost borne down with discouragement under the exercise, which continued from day to day. But through gracious condescension best help was often sensibly vouchsafed in the hour of need; and sometimes I thought I could perceive the prevalence of the holy, solemnizing power of Truth towards the conclusion of some of these opportunities, which raised a hope that my movements were under best direction.

When about half-way through Sussex, I was taken very poorly, and thought it best to return home for a while, and try

the effect of rest under my dear mother's kind care. I am now nearly restored, and desire an increase of resignation, and to stand as a servant in waiting. I often marvel that one so inexperienced, and in many respects so little prepared for such service, should be employed. Dear Stephen, I value thy sympathy, and desire that I may be kept in thy remembrance for good: that the conflict into which my mind is often plunged may not shake my faith, or remove me from the only true foundation.

It was during the short interval spent at home, "under the kind care of his dear mother," that William Forster first became officially connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society. That noble institution had existed since 1804, and from the first he had deeply sympathized with its great object. Though the parent society had been formed in London upwards of eight years, the plan of its country operations had not yet been organized to any great extent. But few Auxiliary Societies had been established, and the "North-East Middlesex Auxiliary Bible Society," including the inhabitants of the parishes of Tottenham, Edmonton, and Enfield, was one of the first of those valuable institutions, which have contributed so largely to the efficiency and wonderful success of the parent Society. It was established at a public meeting of the inhabitants of the district held on the 8th of Ninth Month, 1812; and both William Forster and his father, and his brothers Josiah and Robert Forster, were placed on the committee of management. The subject of this memoir had a good deal to do with preparing an address to the inhabitants on the formation of the local auxiliary. It will be recollected that 1812 was a time of war, and of consequent distress among the labouring class, on

account of the high price of provisions. The document, ably drawn up, contains such delicate touches, and characteristic shades of thought and feeling, that William Forster's *mind* might have been recognized in it, even had it not been known that his *hand* was employed in its preparation. Few readers will regret its insertion entire, in the subjoined note.*

After these interesting home pursuits, W. F. resumed his Gospel labours in Sussex. In the

* *The Address.*—Living in the vicinity of the Metropolis, where the British and Foreign Bible Society took its origin, and from whence its benevolent and widely extended exertions have proceeded to nearly all the habitable countries of the globe, the Committee deem it the less incumbent on them to attempt to explain the benefits which this Institution has already conferred upon the human race.

Every sincere Christian who reflects on the state of those countries where the Holy Scriptures have been most widely diffused, and where the sacred precepts which they contain have formed the basis of the religion of the land, would rejoice at the prospect of their universal dissemination; but anticipating the almost insurmountable difficulties connected with such an attempt, he would be ready to call that man a visionary, who should dare to assert the probability of such a measure. Experience is, however, the ultimate test of the practicability of every endeavour. The British and Foreign Bible Society has, in the course of eight years, distributed the inspired records of Christianity to the hardy Laplander and the untutored African, to the numerous tribes of Hindoostan, and the native inhabitant of the North American wilderness: and those who have long partaken of this divine gift may now rejoice in the hope that the heart of the poor benighted Roman Catholic will be cheered by obtaining free access to the pure and genuine text of the Sacred Volume. Whilst indulging in these pleasing thoughts, we are naturally led to inquire into the wants of our fellow-countrymen. Those who are enjoying the blessings of the same free constitution with ourselves, and who are living in a country where Christianity is both professed and practised, have a pre-eminent claim on our sympathy and generosity; and there is no ground to suppose that the situation of the poor in this neighbourhood varies from that of those in adjacent districts, where the deficiency of the supply of Bibles has been found to be truly lamentable.

Influenced by these considerations, a numerous and respectable representation of the inhabitants of Tottenham, Edmonton and Enfield, have

course of the Tenth Month he writes to a valued friend, though without any special allusion to the service in which he was engaged:—

10th mo.—The sympathy of thy spirit and thy instructive correspondence have been precious to me when I have been weary and sad. I greatly desire that we may be kept in the remembrance one of the other, that by dwelling under that degree of the influence of pure love with which we may be favoured, an increase of that fellowship which binds together

unanimously resolved that a Society should be formed, under the designation of the "North-East Middlesex Auxiliary Bible Society."

In proceeding to discharge the duties imposed upon them, the Committee are unwilling to entertain any doubt that they shall, by the continuance of that liberality which has already been manifested, be enabled to supply those wants that may come to their knowledge, and to contribute to the great and continued expenses of the Parent Institution. They confidently hope that those who have long valued the Scriptures, and been instructed in their contents from their youth, who by the promises and consolations of the Gospel have been animated in their religious pursuits, and comforted in their afflictions, will not hesitate to make use of the present opportunity to evince their gratitude to the Almighty for this invaluable blessing, by their zeal to promote the circulation of those writings "which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." The Committee have no wish to break in upon the scanty resources of those who are contending with many difficulties, or to deduct from the support of the widow, the aged, or the infirm; yet, even among such, if there should be any who wish to evince their love to the cause, and their cordial desires for its prosperity, the smallest sum will be cheerfully and gratefully accepted.

If, while providing for the spiritual comfort and instruction of our indigent neighbours, and for promoting the circulation of the Holy Scriptures among the inhabitants of distant regions; if, while engaged in this work of faith and labour of love, our own attention should be more closely turned to the contents of these inspired writings; if we should thus happily become more deeply impressed with the purity of their precepts, may we not humbly trust that He, to whom we desire with reverence to ascribe their origin, will be glorified by our feeble endeavours, and reward us with a more ample diffusion of the knowledge and experience of that redemption which comes by the Lord Jesus!

the servants of our great Master in the unity of the one Spirit may be mutually experienced.

A variety of exercises have been permitted to attend my path since we saw each other, now about four months. But are we not prepared through all to acknowledge that a life of child-like obedience to divine requiring, notwithstanding the tribulations which await the devoted disciple, is infinitely preferable to all that the wisdom, the riches, or the pleasures of the world can afford us? O! what a favour it is to be counted worthy of the name of discipleship to the Lord of life and glory, and to be assisted to make proof of our love to Him, and our attachment to his righteous cause, by suffering for his name's sake. And such is our present state of trial that we can hardly expect to enjoy the one without being willing to endure the other. May we, then, my dear friend, labour after an increase of resignation to the divine will; and even in seasons of spiritual poverty and apprehended desertion, endeavour to wait in reverent attention to the voice of the good Shepherd. When we feel our weakness, and are assailed with discouragement, how hard it is at such times to adopt the language of the prophet in the days of his early visitation, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." But, hard as it may be to keep in this state of watchful resignation, when the billows may be ready to roll over us in moments of conflict and dismay, we have reason to acknowledge that even in this respect our endeavours have not been in vain; that at his word the tempest has been stayed, and, by the renewal of our faith in his mercy and protection, we have been made willing to follow Him in the way of his requiring. Let us then strive to keep our eye single, and try to wait in patience; thus we may cherish the hope that the work of sanctification will be gradually carried on, even through all the buffetings which may overtake us.

He returned from the southern counties in the Eleventh Month, and towards the end of the year he was again occupied in holding meetings for divine

worship, to which the inhabitants of his own neighbourhood were invited. Thus diligently and almost unremittingly did he labour for the good of his fellow-men, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

About this time Stephen Grellet was pursuing his labour of love and unusual efforts of Christian philanthropy, on behalf of the most destitute and depraved among the inhabitants of London.* Between these two devoted servants of the Lord Jesus, there existed a very close bond of union and of Christian fellowship; and William Forster joined his friend in many of his most remarkable services in the metropolis. Not only did the distressed silk weavers in Spitalfields, the inmates of poor-houses and of places of refuge, and the poor Jews, claim their Christian sympathies and exertions, but still lower depths than those of mere poverty and destitution were sought out; means were actually found to collect together companies of thieves and prostitutes, —the most abandoned characters who walk the streets of the great city—in order to proclaim to them the Saviour's pardoning mercy and redeeming love. With the same object the London prisons were visited, and the depraved criminal, the wretched inmate of the condemned cell, were earnestly entreated to look in repentance and faith to Him who came to seek and save that which was lost—whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." The scenes witnessed on the women's side of Newgate were so appalling, that immediate steps were taken to enlist the sympathies and energetic efforts of Christian

* See his Memoirs, vol. i., chap. 18, &c.

ladies on behalf of the miserable outcasts; and it was in this way that Elizabeth Fry was first led to enter upon those persevering exertions for the moral and spiritual reformation and the more humane treatment of prisoners, which have deservedly placed her name among their greatest benefactors. Long after the retirement of Stephen Grellet from this new and arduous field of labour, William Forster continued to water the seed which they had unitedly helped to sow, and for many years he was the sympathizing coadjutor and the encouraging adviser of Elizabeth Fry, in the noble work to which she devoted so much of her time and talents, constrained not less by the love of Christ than an earnest solicitude for the most suffering and the most sinful of mankind.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAVELS IN THE MIDLAND COUNTIES, IN IRELAND, AND THE WEST OF ENGLAND.

William Forster had scarcely completed his interesting engagements in the metropolis, in company with his beloved friend Stephen Grellet, when he felt it to be his duty to prepare for entering upon an extensive field of Gospel labour in some of the counties of England, and in Ireland. In pursuance of this concern he left home near the end of the Second Month, 1813, and on his way to Bristol he takes an interesting retrospect of some of his past exercises in a letter

To Stephen Grellet.

Henley-on-Thames, *Third Month 8th, 1813.*

It is a favour, and in my better moments I have desired that I might be prepared duly to appreciate it, to be preserved in such a state of lively sensibility as to know when and where Christ reigns, and to be brought into such a state of resignation as to be willing to suffer, and even to mourn for those, who, whilst they profess to believe in the precious influence of the Holy Spirit, are resisting his blessed and powerful visitation.

These feelings which are but little understood by many at the present day, and which the world would scarcely believe if it were possible to describe them,—but which, as they tend to draw the patient disciple into more intimate acquaintance with his crucified Redeemer, strengthen

the bond of union between those who, whilst they desire to serve the same Lord, are made to drink of the same cup. O! that this may be the blessed effect, the present rich reward, of those sufferings in which we have recently partaken unitedly; and which it may be designed by the great Head of the Church that we should individually endure for his great name's sake,—that they may draw us nearer together, and bind us more closely together in his love. So, that, whether it may consist with his will that we should meet together again in this present state of trial, or fill up that which remains of our appointed portion in a far distant part of the earth—we may, as fellow-servants of the same Master, in the renewings of divine life, enjoy that pure and precious fellowship which the world knows not of.

Previous to my leaving home, my love was again brought to the test. I had felt much, whilst we were visiting the poor prisoners in London, for those who were confined in the hulks at Woolwich, and thought it right to speak to some friends to endeavour to make way for me. At one time there seemed a probability of liberty being obtained, but further difficulties appeared, and I was so far discouraged as to give it up. I did not feel condemned. I had heard a more affecting account of their depravity than of any of those we had seen in London; but I think I was pretty much given up to endure all that might be brought upon me. I went with E. F. and A. B., and her sister, to distribute to the necessities of the poor children at Newgate. She had carried one parcel before. It was a very pleasant visit to me. I thought the women seemed very grateful.

I left home last First-day three weeks; and although the separation from my beloved connexions was attended with very poignant feelings, and I think I never more sensibly felt the trial, yet my mind was preserved in a good degree of quiet resignation; and I was comforted in believing that in this season of conflict access was granted to the holy footstool, and that we were permitted to cast our care upon Him who careth for his little ones—leaving the future, and all that future days may produce, unto Him, whose watchful protecting

care is continued to the latest period of life over those who are endeavouring to do his will.

After attending the Quarterly Meeting at Bristol in the Third Month, William Forster was occupied in holding meetings in that part of the country, and through South Wales, till he came to Milford Haven. Thence he writes of a large meeting held in the Wesleyan-Methodist Meeting-house at Narberth, and adds :—

We had many of that denomination. They appear to me, in all parts of the principality where I have met with them, to be a simple-hearted and tender-spirited people. I was comforted in what I thought I could feel among them, and possibly some of them might be refreshed by the opportunity. The thankfulness and satisfaction that some of these poor people have expressed at the prospect of a meeting among them, when I have gone to their cottages to give them the invitation, has affected my mind with tenderness, and been a renewed call for watchfulness on my part. I now look back with gratitude and encouragement in remembering the strength that was afforded me to persevere through the difficulties which sometimes appeared in the way, and that I was counted worthy of breaking bread among them. And if no more than two or three were encouraged in these opportunities it was enough, and far more than I dared to ask for.

From Milford Haven he crossed over into Ireland. Landing at Waterford, he went forward pretty directly to Dublin, where the Yearly Meeting was about to be held.

Ireland, at the time of William Forster's visit in 1813-14, it must be borne in mind, was in many respects very different from what it is now. The events of preceding years had left an impress of a

peculiar kind. Both in a national point of view, and with reference to the Society of Friends, it presented some features of more than ordinary interest and solicitude. It is true that nearly fifteen years had elapsed since the Rebellion of 1798 had been quelled, and people's minds generally had become pretty well reconciled to the Union. Yet the nation was far from being in a settled and satisfactory state; political misrule, religious animosities, and the manifold evils of absenteeism, combined with other causes, tended to keep up a considerable amount of irritation among the different classes of the inhabitants. Party spirit was by no means subdued, and not unfrequently ran high. Social disturbances, and popular outbreaks, were not uncommon; and both life and property were sometimes exposed to peril.

During the Rebellion, the members of the religious Society of Friends had been placed in a very critical position. Firm in their adherence to the cause of Christ—the Prince of Peace—they had faithfully maintained their Christian testimony against all war. Unable, on one hand, to unite with the insurgents, and equally restrained, on the other, from rendering active assistance in carrying on the warlike measures of the Government for suppressing them, it was not to be expected that either party would look upon them with a very friendly eye. Yet such was the meekness as well as the firmness with which they were enabled, under the most trying circumstances, consistently to sustain the peaceable principles of the Gospel, and with evenhanded impartiality to show acts of Christian kindness to the different combatants,

as each, in their turn, were thrown in their way, that, with very little exception, they gained the respect and confidence of both. And though they suffered severely in their property, and had many personal hardships to endure, it does not appear that more than a single life of a member of the Society (and he one who had been unfaithful to its peaceable principles), was sacrificed in any part of the Island, during the whole course of the civil disturbances. A very remarkable preservation was doubtless extended to them, and many hearts were lifted up in gratitude and praise to Him who, in his providence and grace, had condescended to support and help them in the hour of great extremity.*

But, whilst the faith and faithfulness of Friends were thus sustained amidst external commotion, scarcely less painful was the affliction to which the little church was exposed about the same time from internal dissension, by the defection of some of its members, who, departing from "the faith once delivered to the saints," attempted to sap the very foundation of those Christian principles which had caused the faithful to "triumph in Christ Jesus," in the midst of the furnace through which they had been lately passing.

The number of the disaffected was not very large; but some of them were men who occupied prominent positions in the Society, and possessed considerable talent and influence. They *appeared* to have "*a zeal* for God," but "not according to knowledge;" for, being "ignorant of God's righteousness, and going

* Dr. Hancock's "Principles of Peace, exemplified in the conduct of the Society of Friends in Ireland, during the Rebellion in 1798."

about to establish their own," they had not "submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," unmindful of the blessed truth that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Undervaluing, if they did not absolutely set aside, the authority of Holy Scripture, they exalted their own reasonings above the plain testimony of the inspired records; and some of them went great lengths in rejecting the fundamental truths of the Gospel, whilst, with singular inconsistency, they professed to retain a high estimate of the "inward light." In their hands, *disconnected from the great facts of Christianity*—the Deity, Incarnation, and Atonement of Christ—the scriptural doctrine of the direct influence of the Holy Spirit* upon the heart of man, was lamentably perverted to a mere *ignis fatuus*, which, instead of "leading into all truth," and "glorifying Christ" in all his holy offices, became the means of *mis*leading into the most dangerous errors, and of disturbing the peace and harmony of the Society. It was "no new or strange thing" for a Christian church to be thus brought into trial. "It must needs be," said our blessed Lord, "that offences come." From the days of the

* It is a great mistake to suppose that the recognized views of the Society of Friends regarding the operations of the Holy Spirit are in any way opposed to, or at variance with, the testimony of the Scriptures. Nothing could be more explicit than the statement of Robert Barclay on this point. "We shall be very willing to admit it as a positive, certain maxim, *that whatever any do, pretending to the Spirit, which is contrary to the Scriptures, be accounted and reckoned a delusion of the Devil.*"—"Apol. Prop." III. § iv. Whilst, on the other hand, he considers it, in the strong language of those days, "damnable unbelief not to believe all those things to have been certainly transacted, which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures," concerning the things of Christ, &c., &c.

Apostles,* down to the present time "heresies and divisions" seem to have been permitted, "that they which are approved may be made manifest." And to the refutation of some of these by the Apostles, and less authoritative writers of later date, we owe some of the clearest expositions of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the most powerful antidotes to error.

In the crisis to which they were then exposed, the doctrinal soundness of the main body of Friends in Ireland was "made manifest" by the manner in which they were enabled to vindicate their unshaken belief in all the great truths of Divine revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Faithfully upholding these in the face of all opposition, they were strengthened to deal with the disaffected members in Christian love, with a view to their restoration to unity with the body. Most of those who persisted in adhering to their

* It is an utterly groundless assumption, that the apostolic church was free from all error in theory and practice, and fully came up to the glorious ideal of the kingdom of Christ. On the contrary, no little to our consolation and encouragement, the church even then had to contend with as great difficulties, without and within, as in any succeeding period. She was, in the fullest sense of the word, militant; and she can accomplish her final victory, and reach her perfect unity, universality, and holiness, only through a long and unremitting struggle against sin and error, without and within.—"Schaff's Apostolic Church," vol. ii., p. 377.

It is painful to be compelled to acknowledge among the Christians of the apostolic age the existence of so many forms of error and sin. It was a pleasing dream which presented the primitive church as a society of angels; and it is not without a struggle that we bring ourselves to open our eyes and to behold the reality. But yet it is a higher feeling which bids us thankfully to recognize the truth, that "there is no partiality with God;" that he has never supernaturally coerced any generation of mankind into virtue, nor rendered schism and heresy impossible in any age of the church.—"Conybeare and Howson," 3rd edition, vol. ii., p. 538.

divergent opinions quietly withdrew from the Society, or were separated from it in the exercise of its discipline; but no distinct organisation was effected by the seceders. About the time that William Forster paid a general visit to Ireland, some of these,—dissatisfied with the steps they had taken,—were seeking to become re-united to the Society, and were claiming the notice of the Yearly Meeting, respecting which he says:—

The Yearly Meeting at Dublin closed late in the evening of this day week, the 1st instant. To many Friends it appeared to be a time of solid instruction, confirmation, and encouragement. Indeed, there was a remarkably concurrent testimony of gratitude and satisfaction, borne by such as are not apt to speak without feeling. Dear Jonas Stott, whom I value as a sound, judicious elder, acknowledged, at the close, that he had not known such a meeting for many years. There was the appearance, and (if I may say so much) the feeling of very precious unity among the brethren, and a remarkable degree of similarity of view upon interesting and important subjects. In the first sitting of the meeting the attention of Friends was very seriously turned to days of former trial and affliction, when many who were conspicuous members in the Society withdrew, or were separated from it.

It was very satisfactory to observe the deep religious concern that was evinced by Friends as they opened their fears and apprehensions one to the other, lest unsound members should be added to the body by weak Monthly Meetings. And as they very fully expressed their belief that a spirit of infidelity was the principal cause of the devastation which had so lamentably prevailed, they were united in judgment that the Society should be satisfied that applicants for reinstatement were sound in the leading doctrines of Christianity, before they were admitted.

It was agreed to issue a minute of advice on the subject, re-affirming the scriptural views of the Society on some of the fundamental truths of the Gospel—"the miraculous conception, birth, holy life, wonderful works, blessed example, meritorious death and glorious resurrection, ascension and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his eternal divinity, and unity with the Father." On the document being passed by the meeting, William Forster remarks :—

It was pleasant to observe some of the young men and others, who said but little upon other subjects, express their approbation of its being adopted. After all my cogitations and exercises of mind, I became tolerably quiet, in hope that the Society would not by this means be deprived of the reunion of one member who was fully prepared for restoration; and that probably such a minute would help to confirm the faith of some young people, who might be wavering, and doubting what was really the opinion of their elder brethren.

On the last day of the Meeting, a Committee was appointed to consider the state of the Society, which to me and many others was a solid and encouraging opportunity; and a minute of encouragement was drawn up, and is directed to be sent to the Quarterly Meetings. The state of Friends' families, as to the education of their children in consistency with our principles, was hinted at; and I endeavoured in weakness and fear to cast off part of my burden. Friends parted quietly, and I trust that the tribute of gratitude and praise was secretly offered by many, before they separated. The meetings for worship on the two First-days were very large: a great proportion were young people.

From Dublin William Forster proceeded to the province of Ulster, holding meetings in various places on his way :—

5th mo. 9th.—We left Dublin about noon, and came to Drogheda. We readily obtained the use of the Court-house, and after some deliberation appointed a meeting to begin at eleven o'clock. I could perceive that my companions had some fears, but I was not aware of their apprehensions till we came away. Perhaps there is not a larger number of Roman Catholics in proportion to the population in any town in Ireland; and I find that of later times Friends who have visited that place have had very disturbed meetings. I certainly was not without discouragement from various causes. There were not a great many came, but they behaved quietly, and we did not observe any rudeness in the street. I sat just opposite the door, which opened into the principal street; and it was affecting to me to see the poor people come to the door, and evidently manifest a disposition to come in, and seem as if they were afraid. Others would creep upstairs, as if they were aware they were trespassing on forbidden ground. I find that some of them told the Friends when they invited them in that they dare not enter. It was a singular sight to me to see the streets crowded as we came to the meeting with poor people from the country: I think not less than 1000, waiting to take their turn at mass; and I was told that as great a number met every hour from seven to one o'clock in that chapel, besides those that assembled at others in the same town. It is not easy to conceive the extent of the influence the priests maintain in some parts of this nation. Some of those who attended our meeting were serious and tender.

10th.—We came yesterday afternoon to Dunleer, where we appointed a meeting for the evening. It is a small town, with very few Protestants; and it was not known that a meeting had been held there before by any Friend. We had a good-sized room for the purpose. I think I never saw so many persons assembled with so little appearance of seriousness. They were principally the poor native Irish. A man was among them, who had been drinking in the house. I did not feel myself released from endeavouring to express something of my feelings of love for them, and desires for

their peace and future happiness. After I had been speaking for a while, this man got up and called to the people, alarming them, as we supposed, by threatening to fetch the priest. All was in confusion in a moment: the poor people fled in every direction, both out of the door and the windows. A few stayed in the room: I stood still for a while, and then took my seat. Some came back, and, perceiving some disposition to stillness, I ventured again on my feet, yet obtained but little relief. It was a fine evening, and I took a walk, and stopped in two places to talk to the people in the street. They seemed astonished when I told them how far I had come, and the motive which induced me to leave home. Some of them regretted that they had no schools for the education of their children; and when I spoke of the advantage of their being able to read the Scriptures for themselves, a poor woman very emphatically said, "Nothing better, sir." Oh! it would be a happy day for Ireland if the poor people were at liberty to read and think for themselves. On our retiring to bed I could get no sleep. I think I never endured a greater degree of distress than for a few hours that night. The state of these poor Catholics, and their priests, seemed more than I could bear. Nothing short of a capacity to look unto and to confide in the gracious regard of our Heavenly Parent to the workmanship of his hands seemed to give me any relief; and with this feeling I went to sleep.

We came forward to breakfast at Dundalk, a large trading town. It was market day, and the concourse was beyond anything I had seen in England. It appeared an unsuitable time for a meeting; we, therefore, went on to Newry to dine, and thence seven miles further, a bad, hilly road, to Rathfriland, a small town curiously situated on the top of a hill. In the evening we had a meeting appointed for the inhabitants. The house was well filled, mostly with Presbyterians; it was a solid, instructive opportunity, to me at least. We came through Dromore to Lisburn.

13th.—We attended their Monthly Meeting. I sat in the gallery, between worthy John Conran and Ruth Richardson, in her ninety-fifth year, clear in her faculties, of a meek and

tender spirit. She maintained her integrity through all their troubles with great consistency; and seems strong in her love to the Truth, and to those who are endeavouring to support its testimonies.

14th.—We attended a meeting at Dromore, held in the Presbyterian meeting-house; pretty many of the townspeople came. From the appearance of the people, and my own feeling, I could have fancied myself in one of the towns in the low country of Scotland. I was not sensible of any very evident dominion in life and power, yet I trust the precious testimony did not suffer. Their preacher was very civil and respectful, and spoke with satisfaction of the meeting held there by D. Darby and R. Byrd, in their last visit to Ireland.

Diligently pursuing his labours among Friends and the public at large, he writes, on the 24th of Seventh Month, from the County of Tyrone:—

The kindness and hospitality which we meet with as we pass along, and occasionally the consolatory evidence that I am in the way of my religious duty, and under the watchful protection of the good Shepherd, excite feelings of gratitude. They assist my endeavours after continued resignation under the recurrence of impressions which point to the most humiliating line of labour, the pursuit of which will probably be attended with trials of faith and patience, from which, in the very anticipation, the timidity of my natural disposition seems to recoil with fear.

I am sometimes reminded of the mercies which were dispensed in former days, particularly the resignation and confidence in divine protection by which I was supported during my travels in Scotland; and then I endeavour to put my trust in the Lord. But the remembrance of all that is passed, and recourse to every outward means of consolation and encouragement, is often as yesterday's manna. It wants the life that quickens, the power that supports, the hope that maketh

not ashamed. Thus on every fresh occasion of spiritual or outward extremity, I seem to have everything to learn. I am convinced that I have neither storehouse nor barn ; and unless He whom I desire to love, and am endeavouring to serve, commiserate my condition, I feel that I must fall, and that the precious cause will suffer. But, blessed be his name, He does not despise the feeble attempts of his poor servants to seek for refuge in his divine protection, but graciously extends a little help in those seasons of fearfulness and dismay when they think they have forfeited every claim on his tender mercy. He bringeth down and He lifteth up ; He empties us of all apprehension of self-sufficiency, that we may be prepared to rejoice in that blessed experience described by the Psalmist, "All my springs are in Thee."

In the course of the summer he visited the families of Friends in the Monthly Meetings of Grange and Lurgan, and Richhill. As these meetings were not small, and the members of them were resident in country places, often at a considerable distance from each other, it occasioned much travelling. He says of that at Richhill :—

In visiting thirty-six families, with attending their meetings, we travelled considerably above 100 miles. Many of the Friends are in low circumstances ; some of them living in poor cabins, and apparently strangers to much of what we consider the comforts of civilized life, but generally in a state of independence, holding a small portion of land, from six or eight to thirty or thirty-five acres. They grow their own flax, which is spun, and in many instances woven, in the house, and sold in the market as it is made. This is the support of most of the inhabitants in this populous province. Almost every family has a little land : thirty acres is considered a large farm, and enough for a man's whole business. So that there is scarcely a family without a cow, and whose land does not furnish their own peat.

I can scarcely suppose that there is any part of the three kingdoms in which the lower class of the people, in really prosperous times, and where their rents are not over-rated, are placed in a situation of greater independence, and in the enjoyment of a larger portion of the necessary comforts of life. But they are sadly deficient in cleanliness, and in some places there is a great want of industry. Schools are common; and, from the inquiry I have made in several parts, I should suppose there are not many of the poor children deprived of the benefits of education, except in remote situations. The Catholics, mixing more with the Presbyterians and other Protestants, seem to be more aware of the advantages of learning than in Munster and Leinster. In some instances they avail themselves of public schools, and in others they have schools among themselves. I have generally found the poor intelligent, sensible and communicative, and, like the Scotch, inquisitive.

We parted very affectionately from our friends, and came through Armagh and Monaghan. Had I been more watchful I believe I might have found strength to have held a meeting at the latter place; but I admitted discouragement, and have been frequently led to look back with regret. We came to Cootehill, about thirty Irish miles. On First-day we were at meeting in the morning: the number very small. A meeting was appointed for the evening. It was large—all was quiet within. I thought I was afresh favoured with the precious influence of divine love, by which I was assisted to labour in the Gospel of Christ.

From Cootehill we rode through rather a wild country to Castle Blaney, the country mostly inhabited by Catholics. On the way we came near to a funeral; it was the first time I had heard the "Irish cry,"—dismal beyond all description. At Castle Blaney we had a large, satisfactory meeting in a public room over the Market-house. At Dundalk general notice was given, but very few attended; but some were serious, particularly two or three soldiers; it was a trying time to us, but we had a hope that we were in the way of our duty. We had a meeting in the Court-house at Newry—a

place of great dissipation; we were sad, but endeavoured to bear up under all.

In allusion to some disturbances, which had taken place between opposing political and religious parties, he adds:—

Since the late affray at Belfast, there has been another between the Orange party and the Catholics in the county of Derry. It is said that some lives were lost. I hope my dear relations will not indulge too much anxiety on our account. The prospect is undoubtedly gloomy; but at times I am brought into a very favoured state of resignation, and confidence is raised in that power which can preserve through all.

Amidst all that "came upon him daily," the liveliness of his Christian interest in everything relating to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom everywhere, is depicted in an extract from a letter written about this time:—

I am pleased with the hope of obtaining some further intelligence respecting Dr. Naudi's exertions, at Malta, and in parts of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Everything relating to the progress of religion among any people is becoming increasingly interesting to me. My little labours in the same cause, although attended with sufferings and discouragements, are scarcely worthy to be compared to the exertions of such men. The reports of the Bible Society have afforded many an agreeable repast as we have ridden along, and Dr. Steinkopff's tour in Germany, &c., no less valuable. I shall hope to receive more intelligence respecting dear Stephen Grellet. The fund raised in London for the blacks in Antigua affected me with gratitude. Please to send a few of the reports on the Gaelic schools.

After having been engaged for more than three months in the province of Ulster, both among Friends

and the inhabitants generally, his labours there terminated at the Quarterly Meeting at Grange, in the Ninth Month; and, writing to an intimate friend a few weeks after, he remarks :—

9th mo. 25th.—I remained near four months in Ulster, visited all the families of Friends, except in two small meetings, and had many public meetings. By the information which has from time to time been transmitted to England, respecting the state of our Society in that province, thou wilt easily conclude that my sufferings were many and deep. It was a series of deeply humiliating exercises, and sometimes the cup was so bitter that I was ready to shrink from every fresh opening to service, but through matchless kindness I was preserved in a good degree of resignation to the end. I met with many precious young people, who seemed willing to receive a word of encouragement; and there are some more advanced in years who retained their integrity in the day of general desertion. The meetings among the people were in many instances to my relief and encouragement.

Towards the latter part of the time I visited several country places, remote from any town or village. In some of these, the people seemed like the thirsty ground prepared for the heavenly showers. I think I never met with so much openness and such general feeling of tenderness. In some places I had much discouragement to wade through, from the unfavourable impression made on the minds of many serious persons in places remote from Friends, by the unsound principles which were propagated by those who left the Society ten or twelve years since. In some I trust that prejudice has been removed, and that the books we have circulated will tend to confirm the persuasion that we remain attached to the principles of truth professed by our forefathers. It was really affecting to me to perceive the gratitude evinced by some tender-spirited people, on hearing that there were preserved amongst us those who yet retained their integrity on the good old foundation. My little labours often appeared to me to be in much weakness, and under a heavy trial of depression; but

there were times in which my faith was renewed, and I thought I understood the expression, "He that watereth is watered himself."

About three weeks since I attended the Quarterly Meeting for the province of Ulster, where I took leave of those dear Friends amongst whom I had tarried so long. It was an opportunity of general tenderness, one that I think will not soon be forgotten by me.

CHAPTER XV.

SAME JOURNEY CONTINUED.

IRELAND, WEST OF ENGLAND, SCILLY ISLANDS, AND HOME.

Leaving the meetings of Friends in the province of Ulster, and accompanied by kind helpers, William Forster turned towards the north-west, and then took a long circuit to the south, through the counties of Londondery, Donegal, Leitrim, &c., till he reached Moate. The narrative proceeds :—

Our first stage on the 9th of Ninth Month was through Dungannon to Aughnacloy. We obtained the ground-floor of a dwelling-house occupied by the Methodists; it was crowded to an extreme, many behaved soberly, and I hope it was held to some profit. After meeting, one of the churchwardens kindly informed us, if we were disposed to hold another meeting, the parish place of worship should be at our disposal. I trust we were successful in our attempts to clear the Society of the imputation of infidelity which appears to have been so generally and so sorrowfully cast upon it. Our road to Omagh lay through a barren, boggy country: the inhabitants seemed very great strangers to Friends, but we met with great civility. We had a large and satisfactory meeting in a commodious room at the head inn. I was for some time tried with an apprehension of duty to visit the prisoners in the county jail; the way was readily made, and I had a peaceful journey to the next town. Our first visit was, I think, to seventeen felons; four had received sentence of death for robbery and murder. I believe that some of them were sensible of the motive which induced the visit. We afterwards had a religious opportunity with fifty or sixty men, and three or four women,

in the chapel. Some were confined for debt, and others for smaller criminal offences, particularly private distilling; they were very quiet and attentive. At Newton-Stewart the rumour of the unsound principles of those who had left Friends had reached them, and it did not seem at first a very easy thing to convince them—the Methodists—of the consistency of the Society of the present generation with the principles of their forefathers; but, after a pretty deal of conversation, and giving them some books, they acknowledged themselves satisfied, and we had a very crowded, satisfactory, and favoured meeting. It has been a trial to me to be obliged to make use of the meeting-houses of the Presbyterians and the Methodists; but I endeavoured to reconcile the difficulty as well as I could, especially under the consideration that it has brought us into the way of serious people, in different places, who were greatly prejudiced against the Society, and whose prejudices seemed to have been removed by the information given them. Strabane is a large town; the Presbyterian Meeting-house was freely granted. We had one of the largest meetings I have attended in Ireland. Next morning we visited the prisoners at Lifford, confined in the county jail; the opportunity was satisfactory. We then went along the banks of the Foyle, to Johnstown, a poor little place. I believed it best to attempt a meeting; many attended, and I hope there was not any cause to regret the opportunity; we went forwards to Londonderry that night. The Town-hall, a very fine, spacious building, was readily obtained; and we had a large and quiet meeting. The people were desirous of another meeting; but, not feeling that which I thought would warrant the appointment, I believed it best to forbear. I thought it right to propose to my dear companions to endeavour to obtain an opportunity among the soldiers in the barracks; none of us expected it would be granted; but, when the colonel and adjutant were consulted, they expressed their willingness, and said they were glad that they were thought of. A pain in my head returned with much greater violence, and I think for two or three hours exceeded any bodily suffering that I ever endured; my whole frame was

affected, and the pain was so intense that I could scarcely speak. Next day I was better, but far from well. I went to the barracks and spoke to the men; they seemed to regret that they had been disappointed of the meeting, and willingly received a pretty good supply of pamphlets.

Whilst at Londonderry we met with a pious woman, who had turned her house into an asylum for the aged, and a school for youth. She had learnt the straw trade, and was carrying it on to a considerable extent for the sake of giving employment to these poor people, whom I understand she fed and clothed.

My mind has been from time to time greatly distressed from what I have heard and seen of the divided and distracted state of this nation. I am often tempted to impatience, and ready to look on every hand for a release. But I seldom find peace, or the hope of future support, in anything short of unreserved resignation to what I am inclined to believe is the requiring of the divine will. I have passed many anxious hours in some wakeful nights within the last few weeks, and sometimes what I see and hear of the benighted and oppressed state of this poor people seems more than I am able to bear. At other times my heart is fixed in humble confidence in divine protection, and I am cheered with a hope that it may consist with the gracious purposes of divine wisdom, by one means or other, to penetrate that cloud of darkness which overwhelms so large a portion of this nation, and to make way for the spreading of his own truth.

From Derry we went to Letterkenny; we obtained the use of the Court-house, and had a large meeting; there was great appearance of seriousness in some. The neighbourhood was the most rough and uncivilized I had visited for some weeks. On our way we passed through a very mountainous district, having on our right a beautifully diversified prospect of Lough Swilly. We went next day to Raphoe, and in the evening had a very large and quiet meeting in the Presbyterian Meeting-house. We rode through a dreary mountainous country to Ballyshannon, twenty-one miles; that evening the Methodists gave us the use of their

Meeting-house; it was crowded to an extreme, and we had a quiet meeting.

We travelled through a wild mountainous tract of country to Manor Hamilton. I often stopped to converse with the country-people, and was greatly interested with their simplicity. But what I knew and saw of their implicit confidence in the priests very much embittered this satisfaction, and kept me in a state of constant exercise. There is a large society of Methodists, who granted us their meeting-house; a very large number collected. I was told that many of the Catholics attended, and it was affecting to me to hear of the probability of their being made to suffer in consequence.

We rode through a mountainous and unfrequented country to Carrick-upon-Shannon. For several miles we skirted the south side of Lough Allen; the prospects were particularly beautiful and picturesque, and the opposite mountains, covered with little patches of corn and potatoes, had a pleasant appearance. I occasionally conversed with the poor natives; it afforded me satisfaction to find that they were generally alive to the benefits of education, but they seemed great strangers to the Bible. I stopped at one school near the road-side, and found there were 100 boys, some of them fifteen or sixteen years of age; they scarcely knew what I meant by the Bible or Testament. Here is a wide field for the exertions of the Bible Society; but the labourers are few. Believing, at Carrick, that I could not proceed without appointing a meeting, it was very much an act of faith, considering the meeting appointed at Manor Hamilton; but, as I was helped to submit, I had peace. The Methodist Meeting-house was very closely stowed. I thought it a favoured opportunity; many were serious and tender.

In reference to this engagement, and what he had still before him, he writes—

To ———

The meetings were large and remarkably quiet. I have been industriously engaged in distributing books as I came

along, and never saw greater willingness or more earnest desire to obtain them. My faith is often closely tried by outward prospects and considerations. I should be glad to find a door rightly opened for my release, but from my present feelings I scarcely dare to expect it.

I think there never was a time in which I felt myself more of a sojourner in the world, and more fully devoted to the service of the precious cause of Christ. Some parts of Connaught are still before me; but to pursue the prospect seems like running into the very jaws of the enemy, or rather penetrating a cloud of thick darkness without the hope of obtaining any relief. In many parts of the province, Papal influence, with all its progeny of bigotry and superstition, prevails almost without control. It is a cup of what I have already so deeply drunk, that I am afraid even to look upon it again. Oh! my beloved friend, could I tell thee what I have passed through by night and by day, almost from my first landing in this nation, surely thou wouldst feel for me, and with me. It is altogether unsearchable to my understanding. O! that I could praise the name of the Lord for the support and consolation by which He has sustained my tribulated spirit, and for that feeble ray of hope by which my prospects have been brightened in this land; for I do believe He will work until He has broken the yoke with which this poor people is oppressed, and that a highway will be evidently cast up among them, even the way of holiness.

Such is my concern on account of the inhabitants of this nation, and the strength of that love with which my heart is affected, when it is brought into fresh feeling with their situation, that were a door to be opened for free gospel labour among them, I have thought that I could willingly spend the remainder of my days in this land, even if I should never enjoy the comforts of domestic life again.

Coming down to Moate in time to attend the Autumn Quarterly Meeting for Leinster held there, it was a matter of deep interest to him to mingle

again with a large number of his brethren collected on that occasion, before pursuing his religious engagements in Connaught, and parts adjacent. These closely occupied him for several weeks; but a few fragments only remain of his letters and memoranda respecting them. Having turned his course towards the West, he writes:—

I never remember to have been more deeply plunged than on leaving Moate yesterday; I did not dare to retraet. I remembered who it was that sent forth his servants without purse or serip, and felt a degree of eneouragement in remembering the acknowledgment which they were constrained to make on their return. I desire to serve the same Lord, and I am thankful in believing that his power is sufficient for my support. I think I am not over anxious to escape bodily or mental suffering; but the prineipal exercise of my mind is, that I may be preserved in patient resignation, and in humble, steadfast eonfidenee in the superintending eare of Divine Providence.

In a meeting at Athlone in the evening, He who knows how little his children ean bear without his heavenly aid, took pity on my low estate; and, in a meeting in the Methodist Meeting-house, which was fully attended, I was enlarged in gospel love, and thought that the word flowed freely to the people. It was a very quiet and satisfaetory opportunity.

On First-day, the 3rd of Tenth Month, he and his companions were at the small meeting of Friends at Ballymurry, and in the evening at a meeting for the inhabitants of that place.

The friends with whom we lodged seemed full of fearful apprehensions, and were looking forward with great anxiety to a very trying winter. I could but feel tenderly with them; and before we parted we were eomforted and eneouraged by

a revival of faith in that power which can carry through all, and cause the most proving circumstances to work together for good. We returned to Roscommon, and, whilst sitting at table, a pretty large company of disaffected persons was brought into town under a strong guard, and lodged in the county prison. The Court-house was obtained for a meeting with the townspeople for that evening; it was large, and I trust profitable to some.

I was again brought very low in regard to our proceeding; at length I was best satisfied to turn towards Castlerea. It was a tolerably pleasant ride of fourteen miles. We had a meeting in the sessions-house in the evening; some were serious, and I did not regret the meeting. After a quiet night, for which I was thankful, we went through a rich and fertile country to Stokestown; the meeting was larger than most in Connaught, and attended by many of the Catholics. I laboured with much difficulty from bodily weakness, but was enabled to speak the truth with boldness, and to extend an invitation under the influence of that love which seeks to gather.

On the 7th we rode to Elphin. After some little difficulty we obtained the use of the diocesan school-house. The meeting was larger than we expected; and notwithstanding there was some disturbance, and one woman very violently beat her son, a fine boy, for daring to go inside the door, I thought that divine power prevailed to the tendering of the spirits of some who attended. To the Lord be all the praise. Amen.

We had a peaceful ride to Boyle; the meeting was held in the Methodist Meeting-house, which was very full, quiet within doors, but disorderly persons without. It was, if I may say so much, an instructive opportunity; many were solid and afterwards affectionate.

Next morning I felt best satisfied to turn to some parts of Ulster; crossing the Shannon at Leitrim, we had a small quiet meeting at Ballinamore. I felt very low that evening and the next morning, but in the course of the day thought I could sensibly feel the presence of Him in whom I had

believed, as an arm underneath for my support. In this I was encouraged and enabled to persevere.

On the 9th we went forward to Killeshandra, a very neat little town. After we had taken some refreshment, I believed I could not proceed with a peaceful mind without seeking for an interview with the people. We met with much civility from a respectable young man; he is Secretary to a branch of the Hibernian Bible Society, and gave us some interesting information respecting the state of the Roman Catholics in their neighbourhood, particularly in regard to their willingness to receive the Scriptures, and the endeavours of the priests to prevent them. One of these circumstances affected me much. A priest within a few miles of that town, having a character remarkable for the liberality of his religious sentiments, associated much with the respectable inhabitants in the country, and obtained the name of the Protestant priest. He was present at a burial a short time since, and, supposing that he had none about him but "true sons of the Church," produced a paper containing a list of his parishioners who had been supplied with Bibles. Having charged them individually with the offence, he proceeded to threaten them, that unless they boiled their potato-pots with their Bibles before that time to-morrow, his curse and the curse of ——(the rest of his expressions are too shocking to repeat) should rest upon them, and their seed, and their seed's seed for ever, for daring to harbour in their houses the lies and inventions of Luther and Calvin. Just at this juncture a Protestant servant from the neighbourhood stood up and showed himself; the poor priest was greatly confused, and begged him to observe secrecy on the occasion; but all to no effect. The man told the tale, and the priest has been disarded from the houses he formerly visited.

The influence of these men on the sentiments and conduct of the people, and the implicit credulity of their hearers, is beyond what can be easily conceived by those who have not the opportunity of seeing and hearing for themselves. I sometimes comfort myself in thinking that the cloud is too thick and heavy to last much longer. The meeting that

evening was large, and to me it was encouraging and relieving beyond many that we have had.

I hope the meeting next morning in the court-house was not held in vain. We afterwards obtained ready access to the prisoners in the county jail, and had a religious opportunity with them; there might be about fifty. The poor men were almost all Catholics; they behaved well, and seemed serious.

We went forward to Belturbet; the evening had closed in when we reached the place. I encouraged my companions to go, and they soon met with some of the most respectable inhabitants, who cheerfully offered the Methodist Meeting-house. The meeting was appointed for half-past seven; the evening was very wet; but when we reached the house it was nearly as full as it could hold. It was to me a very precious meeting; the Gospel was preached to the poor, and I was strengthened in faith to approach the holy footstool. It had been a laborious and exercising day both to body and mind, but closed in peace; and I found renewed encouragement to put my trust in the Lord.

Having reached Sligo, he writes on the 13th of Tenth Month:—

In looking towards proceeding into the counties of Mayo and Galway, the mind is involved in unutterable conflict. My health is still in a delicate and feeble state: the weather is become so wet and cold, that I sometimes fear my bodily ability is not equal to the exertion. But this, though an important consideration, is far from bearing the most weight. Having suffered so much from what I have already seen and felt of the darkness, bigotry, and superstition which prevail in this country, I tremble at the idea of penetrating further into the cloud; and sometimes my faith is closely tried in considering the little probability of any good resulting from what may be brought upon me. But after all, if I may but be favoured with sufficient evidence of the Lord's requiring, I believe I am resigned to be disposed of in any way that may accord with his unsearchable wisdom.

After attending a large and very quiet meeting, he adds :—

I have been endeavouring to do my best in much weakness of body, and under some difficulty from the trying affection in my throat which sometimes almost prevents my utterance. But I have comfort in believing that He to whom I desire to devote all the remainder of my strength both bodily and mental, was not afar off, and by his solemnizing presence made up that which might appear to be wanting.

From Sligo he turned to the south-west, had "a very crowded meeting" at Ballina, then a larger one at Westpool, and at Castlebar, and a "small one" at Tuam. Thence he came on to Galway, and writes :—

We are now returned from a second meeting with the inhabitants of this large and populous town—that last evening was very much crowded; there were many respectable people attended, both Protestants and Catholics. The meeting this evening was held in the county court-house: both last evening and this some panes of glass were broken. The mayor kindly attended this evening: when the stone was thrown, apprehending, I suppose, that the people were likely to become troublesome, he sent for a guard from the barracks, and the soldiers kept sentry at the door till the close of the meeting. We believe that they had no arms except their bayonets; and I think if I had known of it that it would have occasioned me some uneasiness: towards the close the people were generally quiet. My mind is much more relieved than I could have expected, and I am now quite satisfied to proceed. We have met with much kindness and civility from many of the respectable inhabitants of this neighbourhood. I suppose there is no town in Ireland where Friends are less known; but it is extraordinary and encouraging to find the good report which the Society has obtained both here and in some other remote parts of Connaught.

From Galway, William Forster bent his course towards Dublin; and upwards of three months were now occupied in visiting the families of Friends of that large meeting, and in attending to other religious services both in the city and the neighbouring meetings. At the end of the Second Month he writes from Edenderry, after having been some time confined at a Friend's house from illness:—

If I know my own heart, I do not wish to be spared any of those bodily sufferings which, under the Divine blessing, may be made a means of accelerating the work of sanctification. My principal desire for an increase of strength and more unremitting health is that I may be enabled fully and faithfully to accomplish the work in which I have believed myself required to engage. May the day's work keep pace with the day: in my better moments this is the prevailing exercise. Then, let the end be when and where it may, there is room to hope it will be in peace.

It seems to be generally admitted that there has not been the same degree of outrage, and the same appearance of disaffection amongst the lower class of the inhabitants since the Rebellion of 1798, and a few years subsequent to it, as within the last few months, particularly in the counties bordering on the Shannon. The recitals of the shocking and barbarous cruelties of that day, and the apprehension that the same disposition still remains, has often excited the feeling of tenderest sympathy with those whose lot is fixed in such a neighbourhood, and who see no way open for their escape. And sometimes I think I feel what words can scarcely describe for their poor deluded fellow-countrymen, who are taught to think that all the mischief and cruelty they commit on those who are of a different community, are not only allowable, but even commendable.

The inhabitants of our favoured island can scarcely appreciate their privileges; nor do I believe that strangers, or such as pass rapidly through this nation, can fully comprehend the

real state of the people in Ireland. Education is making rapid progress in almost every quarter, at least where I have been; and one may reasonably calculate upon a proportionate improvement in civilised life. But I acknowledge I do not entertain sanguine hopes of better days until the Scriptures have obtained a free and unfettered circulation. When the people can really believe that they are at liberty to think and judge for themselves on subjects of a religious nature, the priests will lose their influence; and, in proportion as pure scriptural truth is acknowledged, it is not too much to expect that charity will gain its own dominion, and thus, perhaps, a future generation may witness a bloodless reformation. To every feeling mind it must be a consideration most deeply affecting that, on a moderate calculation, three millions of the inhabitants of Ireland are debarred from this highly valuable Christian privilege.

On reviewing his late engagements in Dublin, he remarks:—

I met with many interruptions from the state of my health. I visited the prisoners in the county jail of Kilmainham, and the city prison of Newgate; both very formidable in prospect. They were, as such opportunities always have been to me, very affecting. The First-day afternoon previous to my leaving the city was an instructive and awakening opportunity. The following Third-day, at Sycamore Alley, tender counsel and encouragement flowed like a stream of life and love; and we were permitted to approach the sacred footstool with thanksgiving and praise. After this meeting my bonds seemed to be loosened, and I thought that a release was intelligibly proclaimed. I was preserved in a peaceful and tender state during the remainder of my stay in the city. The evening before I left there was a large company in Blessington Street [Robert Fayles']; and in the love of our Heavenly Father I took leave of many who had shown me much kindness during my sojourning among them.

Taking his departure from Dublin early in the Third Month, he proceeded to visit the South of Ireland.

I set off on Sixth-day the 4th instant: a winterly morning, snow and rain; it was a memorable ride to me. I was led to remember the feelings of discouragement under which I returned to Dublin three months before—the variety of humiliating prospects which were then before me, and the little expectation I then had that I should ever obtain relief. I looked back on the many weary steps I had trod among Friends in that meeting, when there seemed none to help me. But being permitted to be released from such an arduous field of labour with quietness and peace, my soul was filled with thanksgiving. For some miles as I rode along I seemed swallowed up in divine love, and a constant song of rejoicing seemed to run through the whole man.

On reaching Limerick, he takes the following retrospect of his journey:—

I am inclined to think that it will not be unprofitable to me to retrace some of the steps I have recently trod. I trust that He whose cause is become increasingly dear to my very life has not withheld his divine assistance, but has made a way for me through manifold discouragements, and enabled me to discharge that which He has been pleased to require at my hands. He has been strength in my weakness; and a present help in many an hour of sore extremity. Blessed be his holy name.

We had a tedious journey through the snow to Rathangan. On First-day I attended both their meetings. I was comforted; and after a deep plunge my faith was afresh confirmed in the morning meeting. Most Friends gathering again in the evening at W. R.'s, counsel and encouragement were freely imparted.

I readily accompanied my kind friends, Samuel and Deborah Neale, to Newington. They have a noble mansion in a

beautiful demesne, and afford a valuable speeimen of Irish hospitality; but they live in the midst of the most undesirable neighbours. I think there are but one or two Protestant families besides themselves in the parish; and to hear them deseribe their situation at the time of the Rebellion is enough to make the stoutest heart tremble.

Having recovered from an attack of illness, which detained him, for some time, at S. and D. N.'s, he continues :—

I left this hospitable retreat, and attended a meeting at Monasterevan. I think none but those who have been similarly cireumstaneed can fully eomprehend the feelings of gratitude with whieh I was affeeted on feeling that I was onee more made a minister of the word of reeoneiliation. I returned next day to Rathangan, and was preparing to proeeed to Edenderry; but, believing I was in debt to the inhabitants of the former town, Friends very kindly entered into my eoneern. There were not many at meeting in the evening, but a feeling of peaee at the elose was very preeious. I was kindly reeeived by my dear friend William H———, a valuable elder, possessing great tenderness and exemplary humility. A meeting next evening at Edenderry was large, mostly Roman Catholies. I was made bold in deelaring what I believed to be the Truth, and was mueh affeeted by the tendering power of divine love. In the eourse of the day I ealled on a few Friends, and I thought our graeious Master made himself known by the breaking of bread. On Seeond-day morning I set off early, parting from my worthy host and his family in mueh love and brokenness of spirit. He has been a man of many trials in the time of their troubles —his house was robbed between thirty and forty times. I met with an agreeable reeeption from the Friends at Tullamore. A meeting in the evening in the Town-house was very large, and to my apprehension a solid and favoured opportunity. On Fourth-day, at a meeting for Friends, I was under very eonsiderable exereise for the inhabitants. A meeting in the

Methodist Meeting-house was large and crowded—many of the Catholics were there. Being remarkably clothed with love, I was enabled to rise above all creaturely fear, and believe I discharged my duty with a good degree of faithfulness. The meeting was quiet, and I was glad that I had been favoured with faith and resignation adequate to the exercise. I thought a meeting with Friends at Roscrea one of instruction and encouragement. Not feeling what I thought sufficient to warrant the appointment of a public meeting, I spent the evening at a Friend's house. I was greatly discouraged at the appearance of Nenagh the next day. I think I have not seen the same number of whiskey-houses in proportion to its size in any other town in Ireland: this lamentable sight occasioned much dismay. A meeting in the Methodist Meeting-house was large. I endeavoured to do my best. Many soldiers attended. The number of serious persons in the different regiments of militia appears to me a favourable sign of the times. Next day I came to Limerick.

Alluding to the formation of the Tract Association, he remarks:—

Every one is not so much interested in the work of distribution as myself. I wish to be industrious when and where I have the opportunity. Never did I feel, as of later days, more given up to spend and be spent in the service of the Gospel. An outward resting-place seems to be very far distant—sometimes I get a glimpse of it; but then again my views are enlarged, and I am almost ready to conclude that I shall never find a settled abode until I rest for ever. The will of the Lord be done.

I had much serious thought respecting the printing of the Gospel of John from the Douay, without the notes. I had obtained an estimate for the printing of 1000, but was discouraged, having some jealousy over myself lest I should go too far; but now I regret it. I could have distributed many since I left Dublin to the cabins and poor people on the road; it is a debt that I fear will never be discharged. Who knows but it might have proved the beginning of a good work to

some young people, in a family or a village. Such considerations should make us careful that we do not hastily put by any opening to civil or religious usefulness. "Thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or both shall be alike good."

He was detained some time at Limerick, and in its neighbourhood, diligently labouring in the service of the Gospel, both among Friends and the inhabitants more generally; also in visiting the prisons. He afterwards went forward to Cork; and, having completed his religious services in that city, he proceeded to Waterford. There he was engaged, in the love of Christ, to visit Friends from house to house, besides pleading the Redeemer's cause on various public occasions. The Quarterly Meeting at Clonmel next attracted his attention; and, after having been with his friends on that occasion, he continued his Gospel labours for some time in that neighbourhood. In the midst of these, his thoughts turned to other prospects of religious service, and he writes at this time, from Clonmel:—

It may be six weeks before I am likely to cross the Channel. I have an apprehension of service in some parts of South Wales remote from Friends, and I often look towards the Western Counties under feelings of gospel love, and an apprehension of a general visit. I think there never was a period in which I felt myself a greater debtor to the Church, nor more entirely given up to the disposal of the Lord. O! that my friends may feel with me, and be willing to crave my preservation in humility and the fear of the Lord.

The Yearly Meeting in Dublin was now again at hand, and William Forster went up to attend it. Not much information respecting his services on that occasion, and immediately after it, has been

preserved; but there he again met with his beloved friend, Stephen Grellet, lately returned from the continent of Europe. The latter speaks of his "beloved friend, William Foster, being often greatly favoured in his ministerial labours, and joining him in several of his arduous services" after the Yearly Meeting. They had "two large meetings with the soldiers, who were in garrison in the castle, and held also several meetings among the most degraded portion of the inhabitants."*

On leaving Dublin, William Forster extended his labours to the County of Wexford and other parts of Leinster Quarterly Meeting. In the course of them he writes in the Sixth Month:—

I had a sweetly peaceful ride to Ballitore; next day, in the forenoon, attended a meeting appointed for the Friends there, where, under the influence of that love which seeks to heal and restore, I was made to speak the truth in simplicity. I was afterwards brought very low under the humiliating prospect of a meeting with the inhabitants of the village. I surrendered myself to the service, and was very deeply plunged in the afternoon—I think never more so since I came into this nation. My gracious Master did not forsake me. I was mercifully enabled, to my own satisfaction and confirmation, to point out the way of reconciliation and redemption through Christ, and through Him alone, and to hold forth an invitation to Him as the word—the fountain of healing waters. Blessed be the Lord, He was my support and defence.

Again turning his course southward, in the Seventh Month, he says:—

I mentioned the exercise of my mind respecting a meeting at Templemore, and it was encouraging to see how readily Friends set themselves at liberty to afford the necessary

* See S. G.'s Memoirs.

assistance, although their number is but small, and their outward circumstances far removed from affluence. We had a large gathering in the Methodist Meeting-house; I found part of the same regiment of soldiers that I met with at Nenagh some months before. To my own admiration and encouragement I was strengthened to labour so as to obtain relief. I think I have not often been sensible of the same degree of power on such occasions. I thought the meeting closed under a very solemn feeling—the people seemed to be in a very precious state of tenderness. Blessed be the Lord! I believe it was his doing; to Him be all the praise.

I passed rather an uncomfortable, anxious, and nearly sleepless night. When I am amongst the poor Catholics, lodging at a Popish inn, or in any other way brought to feel with them or for them, the distress is often unutterable. Next morning there was a fair, and probably, before the day closed, a fight; for a fair without a fight, in that part of Ireland, is not a very common thing.

I came forward to Thurles to breakfast, a pretty large market town;—a dark, Popish place, famous for the bigotry and intolerance of the people, and these barbarous, bloody fights. I felt considerably exercised about a meeting, but I did not see the way clearly opened. We came by the celebrated ruin of Holy Cross, and the remains of an extensive monastery, to Cashel, and the next stage brought us to Clonmel. I suppose there is no part of Ireland in which the people may be considered in a state of greater barbarism. I got along in safety, not so much oppressed in spirit as I had anticipated. We met a cordial welcome from my dear friend Isaac Jacob and his valuable wife. In the evening I had a pleasant walk on the banks of the Suir. I seemed to be quite out of harness, and enjoyed my liberty. On our way home we came by a large bonfire—I suppose not less than twelve loads of turf; it was just lighted, and a large number of people were asssembled. They were to have a dance; and their revelry and drunkenness in all probability, as is usually the case, would continue till morning. It was to me a very affecting spectacle.

William Forster was now closely engaged in a visit to the families of Friends in Clonmel, and in that Monthly Meeting. After having accomplished these and some other religious services in those parts, he went down to Waterford. Here his extensive and laborious exertions in the work of the Lord—for the good of Ireland—were brought to a peaceful conclusion, and he felt at liberty to return to his native land.

On the 30th of the Seventh Month, 1814, he writes from Milford Haven to his beloved parents :—

> After a favourable passage of about twelve hours, I am once more permitted to set my foot on British ground. I parted with my friends in Waterford, and other parts of Munster, in dear love and unity, and was favoured, through unmerited mercy, to leave the nation peaceful and relieved, I think I may say, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord.

More than fourteen months had been closely occupied in his Gospel labours in Ireland. Instead of now returning to enjoy repose in the bosom of his own family circle, the prospect of further religious service alluded to in writing from Clonmel, about three months before (see p. 175), pressed heavily upon him, and, "entirely given up to the disposal of the Lord," he at once resumed his arduous engagements in his service. He spent some weeks in South Wales, holding meetings for religious worship among the inhabitants, and proceeded afterwards into the Western Counties beyond Falmouth, visiting the meetings of Friends, and, as before, labouring in the Gospel among the inhabitants at large. With a single eye to the leadings of the Heavenly Shepherd, and leaning upon his support, he gratefully appreciated

also the help and encouragement of his friends, who kindly entered into sympathy with him under the pressure of his various exercises and daily acts of dedication, of which no particulars are preserved.

In the course of his religious labours in the West, he visited the Scilly Islands, of which visit he writes to his former kind companion Edward Carroll ;—in the autumn of 1814 :—

We went to Penzance, and the next day in the forenoon took our passage in the packet for Scilly. We met with a contrary wind, and had, of course, a tedious passage. The voyage is often performed in five or six hours, but ours was nineteen. We landed on the principal island, called St. Mary's. The next day—First-day—we had a meeting in the Methodist Meeting-house, in which we were strengthened in faith to believe that the dedication to what I had yielded through many conflicts, and under much discouragement, met the approbation of the Great Master ; many attended, and behaved with seriousness and attention. In the evening we had a meeting in the Court-house, appointed principally with a view to the military stationed in the garrison. It was much crowded, and tended to more relief than I could have hoped for.

We had hoped on Second-day to have gone to some other island ; but the wind was so strong, and the water so rough, that it hardly seemed safe to venture in an open boat. We had a meeting that evening in a village, a short distance from the principal town.

The following day being more stormy, we were, of course, detained as before, and went in another direction, where we had a meeting as large as the house would contain. These were two precious meetings, very quiet ; and I thought the love and power of the Gospel were evidently prevalent.

On Fifth-day morning, the wind having become moderate, we hired a boat, and went first to the island called St. Agnes, where, for want of more suitable accommodation, we held a

meeting out of doors. The day was fine; many eame together very cheerfully, but it appeared elear that religious eonsiderations had no very deep hold of the minds of most of the inhabitants. I was mueh discouraged; but, as I attended to what I believed to be the impression of duty, I thought I was sensible that the divine power was at work, and I was comforted in the apprehension that some feelings of tenderness were excited in the hearts of a few. These poor people seemed to be mueh negleeted,—seldom visited by their appointed teaeher; and I thought there was reason to fear that the young people were growing up in lamentable ignoranee. We left them in the afternoon with the expression of gratitude on their part, but with a heavy heart on mine, and went to the island of Treseo, the seeond in size. We had a meeting that evening in a plaee much too small for those who inelined to attend; it was a satisfactory opportunity. I thought we met with awakened minds, and some that were sensible of the power of the word seeretly at work for the salvation of the soul.

Next day we erossed to an island ealled Bryars, and had a meeting in the evening. It did not appear to me that we met with many there sensible of much of what we deem the life of religion. We went in the afternoon to Samson's Island, where I think there are but five or six families, eontaining in all thirty-two inhabitants. These poor people appeared to be suffering under many disadvantages; they have no public worship amongst themselves, and most of them are ignorant of letters. They soon left their work, and gathered together, and behaved with as much seriousness as we eould have looked for. We left them early in the evening, and had a delightfully pleasant sail about three miles to our head-quarters on Mary's Island.

It was cause for gratitude that, eonsidering the season of the year, we had been favoured with sueh an opportunity of visiting those islands with so little danger. The weather was fine and the water smooth, but it is not unfrequently very dangerous sailing in those narrow channels in the winter time; the sea often runs with a heavy swell, and there are

numerous shoals and rocks, both above and below the surface of the water, which, to a stranger, have a very terrific appearance.

There was still another island that had not been reached, called St. Martin's, and to it we went on First-day afternoon, and in an empty house that evening met nearly all the inhabitants of the island, perhaps two hundred. Strength was graciously vouchsafed to labour, and many seemed grateful for such a mark of attention to their best interests.

We returned that night; a meeting the next day was appointed for the inhabitants, which was largely attended. I was brought very low and much tried. Through the gracious condescension of the good Shepherd it proved a season memorable for the extension of divine regard. It was a precious meeting, the word seemed to go forth with power; thy poor brother was assisted to call upon the careless, the indifferent and unbelieving, to plead with the rebellious, to reprove the backsliders, to encourage the sincere-hearted, and to comfort the afflicted. Let all the praise be given unto Him, and to Him alone, who is pleased, by the weak things of this world, to work for the honour of his name. After this farewell opportunity, and having the next day visited the poor-house, the way seemed to open for our liberation. We were twenty-nine hours at sea, part of the way a dangerous voyage. I was supported beyond what I could have hoped for, and was kept in good measure from a disposition to murmur.

On his return from the Islands, he again diligently pursued his Christian labours among Friends and others in the Western Counties, till, after an absence of nearly two years, he was permitted once more to return to his father's house. He arrived there on the 20th of the Twelfth Month, 1814.

It was to me (he says), and to my dear parents, and other beloved connexions, a joyous meeting. On the following

Fifth-day I had an opportunity of returning my certificate. I felt a quiet and peaceful calm on the occasion, beyond what I could have hoped for. Our Quarterly Meeting was the succeeding Third-day. I very sensibly felt my own and the church's loss in the removal of my beloved and honoured friend, J. G. Bevan.* I often seem to want his counsel and encouragement, and sometimes feel much stripped without his kind and fatherly aid. May it induce me to look with greater purpose of heart to Him who is able, and, as far as He sees meet, is willing, to make up for all the various privations He is permitting to attend his children in this their probationary state.

* See his "Life and Letters," by Josiah Forster.

CHAPTER XVI.

VARIOUS RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENTS IN 1815 AND 1816.

THE "joyous meeting" with his beloved parents and connexions, after an absence of nearly two years, was no prelude to a long enjoyment of the comforts of home. William Forster's eye was kept steadily fixed upon the work to which he was called; and the new year had scarcely opened upon him before he felt himself constrained to "bind another sacrifice to the horns of the altar." Though freely given up to the service of Christ, it was no light matter to him so soon again to think of entering upon a new field of labour. On the 5th of First Month, 1815, he writes respecting it—

After many moments of anxious thoughtfulness and deep conflict of spirit, I have again ventured this day to call the attention of my friends at our Monthly Meeting to a prospect of religious service, which has for some weeks been before me, in Norfolk, and some of the Eastern Counties.

It has cost me more than I can describe—like the offering of the halt and the lame to the Lord; but I am not altogether without some faint glimmering of hope, that in the riches of his ancient condescension, the weakness of his servant will be compassionated, and that He will direct my steps in the counsel of his unerring wisdom.

Several months were closely occupied, during the spring, in this religious service, but hardly any particulars are preserved regarding it. He was, as

usual, engaged in attending the meetings of Friends; and in many places he extended his gospel labours to the public at large, both in Norfolk and the adjoining counties.

In the course of his journey he came to Norwich, and held a number of meetings for the inhabitants of that city and the neighbourhood, besides being engaged in much religious service, both of a public and a private nature, among Friends. Joseph John Gurney, at that time about the age of twenty-seven, entered with much interest into his various religious concerns, and was his frequent attendant, accompanying him afterwards in a journey through some other districts, before he had himself come forth as a minister of the Gospel. Kindred spirits could not fail to be mutually attracted to each other. The disparity in age between them was not great. Though comparatively a veteran in the service and ministry of Christ, William Forster was the senior only by about four years and a-half; and satisfactory proof is not wanting that his younger friend derived much permanent benefit from being thus thrown into his company, and partaking so largely of his Christian labours. Referring to this visit of William Forster many years after, Joseph John Gurney remarks:—"My attachment to the principles and practices of Friends was confirmed by a journey I made as a companion to William Forster, through some parts of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, &c. This was the foundation of that warm and intimate brotherhood which has ever since subsisted between us, and which never bound us in a stronger tie than it does at present. His ministry and example powerfully impressed me; and I soon found that,

beneath the veil of his modesty, there lay a rich treasure of intellectual power." *

The recognition was mutual. They saw each other, like face answering to face in a glass. With that true "discerning of spirits," so remarkably bestowed upon him, William Forster at once saw and appreciated the sterling excellence of his friend. Unprejudiced by surrounding circumstances and family position, or anything else that might have arrested the attention of a superficial observer, he obtained a deep view of the hidden worth of the inner man; and he could not but tenderly sympathise with a heart that was athirst for God—that had been deeply touched by the knowledge and the love of Christ, and earnestly longed to become wholly subject to the power and the leadings of the Holy Spirit. He well knew the value, also, to any Christian church, of the sanctified talents and large acquirements of those who, like Paul, can honestly say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" and he was not slow to express his Christian interest in the pursuits of his friend, or in handing him the word of brotherly encouragement in the work which was then claiming his earnest attention.† Not many months after his return home, he writes—

* J. J. G.'s printed, but not published, Letters, Journals, &c.

† This was "The History of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its largest character and bearings, as set forth in the Scriptures." Though never published in its original form, it afterwards furnished the material for several important chapters in his "Essays on Christianity," and the "Biblical Notes." See his Memoirs by J. B. Braithwaite, vol. i., p. 109.

To J. J. Gurney.

I wish I knew how to tell thee all I have thought and felt in reference to thy Biblical researches, and how much I am interested in the result. I am really glad that thou hast given up thy time and attention to the subject, particularly so because I was aware that thou wast impressed with its importance. I think thou wilt not attribute it altogether to the working of a weak mind, if I say that I felt so much the awfulness of the engagement, that I could not but desire in secret aspiration to the Source of help, that grace might be granted adequate to the exigencies of the occasion. Nor could I doubt but that He who knew thy desire to promote his glory would vouchsafe the aid of his Spirit, so that at least thy own faith might be strengthened, whilst thou wast endeavouring to do what thou couldst for the confirmation of thy fellow-believers.

I am the better pleased with the thought of thy observations being made public, under the consideration that they will wear an appearance doctrinal or critical, rather than controversial; the latter has been so much the case with the anti-Socinian tracts that I have met with, and it is so difficult to manage that kind of writing with a truly Christian temper, that I fear our adversaries have had a little cause for triumph on that head.

The doctrine of the eternal divinity of the Lord Jesus has obtained much of my most serious thoughtfulness since I last saw thee. I feel it to be one of infinite importance. I am more and more convinced of its truth, and regard it more than ever as the keystone of our holy religion. Take that away, and the grand combination of truth in the mystery of redemption will soon fall into confusion. O! how I love to dwell upon the mercies of God in Christ Jesus. How it humbles the pride of man into the very dust of his unworthiness; and, when applied under the animating influence of the Spirit, how it raises the soul in hope of an inheritance incorruptible in the heavens! No room for the creature—its own works, its own merits, or its own excellencies. There

every crown is cast down at the footstool of the Redeemer, and Christ within and Christ without become our hope of glory—not the one without the other, but both in blessed unison, exalting his own praise.

During the ensuing summer, William Forster visited the families of Friends in some of the Monthly Meetings around London, and held meetings also with the inhabitants of those districts. With this service before him, he writes:—

6th mo. 15th.—I am often ready to think that none but those who have drunk of the same cup, and been baptized in measure with the same baptism, can comprehend the sense of strippedness, and the humiliations, into which the poor servants are brought when permitted thus to feel for themselves and the individual members of the Church. How often does that prevail which would lead us to adopt the language of the prophet, "I am a man of unclean lips;" and sometimes to conclude that the subsequent language may be descriptive of the trying situation in which we may believe that we are even wisely placed! But when, through condescending mercy, we can believe that our lips are touched afresh, and the sense of iniquity is taken away, then, who cannot but speak well of the name of the Lord, and tell of his mercy to those that trust in Him, and are devoting themselves to his service?

Undoubtedly every quickened mind must acknowledge that it is a mark of unmerited mercy to be allowed at any time to handle these sacred things, to lay hold of them for ourselves, or to be enabled to apply them to others. But, alas for me! my faith is mostly at so low an ebb, and such is the deeply abiding sense of spiritual poverty with which I am tried, that I sometimes fear, instead of being able to help my fellow-pilgrims forward on their way, that my coldness, and insensibility, administer discouragement to the feeble hearted; and that I am in danger of increasing the number of those who are making them sad whom the Lord

would not have to be sad. But, notwithstanding this, my peace, and all my hope of preservation, seem to depend on my endeavouring, under this sense of weakness, to discharge, from day to day, the duty that bears the smallest evidence of the divine will.

Nay, I seem pressed in spirit to get forward with the work before me, and to offer up myself yet more devotedly to be spent in the service of the Gospel. Thus am I almost a mystery to myself, and I am often brought to feel that He with whom we have to do is past finding out. His ways, as well as his works, are incomprehensible to his poor, finite, dependent creatures. O! then, that I may be enabled, at all times and on every occasion, whether in suffering or rejoicing, in heights or in depths, in riches or poverty, from the sincerity of my soul to breathe the language, Thy will be done. In my better moments this is all I ask; but how hard to flesh and blood! When we would do good, how often is evil present with us!

During the progress of this engagement, he writes :—

To J. J. GURNEY.

Staines, *18th of Eighth Month, 1815.*

The remembrance of thee is attended with that sweet and precious feeling which I take to be a lively sense of the fellowship of the Gospel of Christ; and I often recur with peculiar satisfaction to the few days we passed together in Suffolk and Essex—to our meetings, our conversation and our readings, but more especially to what I *felt*, and what I believe thou felt with me. The last half-hour of our last stage is to this day a subject of very grateful recollection; it was one of those bright spots in my pilgrimage to which I trust I shall often look back with comfort and satisfaction.

Now I want to tell thee where I have been for the last few weeks; but I have such a thorough dislike to anything in myself bordering upon egotism, though I fear hardly enough so upon a right ground, that I have scarcely courage to

begin; but as I value thy sympathy, and wish to retain a corner in thy heart for good, in spite of myself, I will try to tell thee a little of the way in which I have been led—of my troubles and rejoicings.

When I had got through Barking Monthly Meeting, I was joined by my dear sister Rachel (my brother Josiah's wife), in a visit to our own members. It took up three or four weeks. I was often plunged into the depth of my infirmities and laid very low; but I have had to rejoice in these dispensations of divine wisdom, for by them the creature was subjected, former experience was forgotten, and, having nothing to trust to but the renewing of the Holy Spirit, I was sometimes made glad in Him who is the resurrection and the life. When thus permitted to look unto Jesus, the faintest glimpse of his power and glory never failed to give me comfort and support; so I was not altogether without my reward in some fresh confirmation of faith.

I left home last First-day two weeks, and had a meeting in a barn at Harrow, on the way to Uxbridge. It was very large; the love and power of Christ were richly and eminently displayed in my view, and I think I never felt more of the consolations of the Gospel dispensed for my own support and encouragement than whilst travelling alone that evening,—a striking contrast to conflicts, fears and doubts which assailed me on my setting out. Such seasons are truly like a brook by the way. If the foretaste be so unutterably glorious, so completely satisfying, what must the fulness be? But we often rise to fall; and sometimes with little hope of being lifted up again; so it was with me. I had to wade under much sensible weakness in our visit to Friends as we went from house to house; but yet I trust the Lord was with us. Blessed be his name, He made his power manifest. Last First-day evening we were at a meeting at Sunbury, a large village on the banks of the Thames; it cost me much previous conflict, but ended to my comfort and relief. Every First-day evening since I parted from thee at Plashet has been occupied in similar engagements. Most of the meetings have

been held in villages where the people seemed much unacquainted with our Society, so that the order and quietness which prevailed were the more striking and satisfactory. When I have been through Wandsworth Monthly Meeting, I trust the present commission will soon close. Sometimes I wish for a little respite, but my principal desire is for that state of resignation in which I can feel it to be my daily meat and drink to do the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Not much "respite" appears to have been allotted him; for, soon after the conclusion of the service in his own Quarterly Meeting, more distant prospects of religious labour opened before him, and he writes:—

To ————.

10th mo. 12th.—It was cordial to my best feelings to find, through thy letter to dear Elizabeth Fry, that, at the close of an engagement so laborious and exercising in its nature, and protracted so much beyond thy expectation, thou wast permitted to participate in that holy peace which tends to stay the mind in some degree of assurance that the great Master has condescended to accept the dedication of his poor, unworthy servants.

This is truly heavenly treasure, of which the more we are prepared for its enjoyment, the more unworthy we still feel ourselves to be of such evidence of divine regard. I have often been led to admire the tender dealings of our Heavenly Father towards his believing children in preparing them for his own service; first inclining them under the influence of his love to offer themselves to his disposal, and then, when the surrender has been made, stripping them of all apprehensions of their own ability, plunging them into an abasing sense of their unworthiness, leaving them for a season a prey to their doubts and fears. In an unexpected hour, when He sees meet to call for an exercise of their faith, He grants them just

sufficient strength to step forward in obedience to his word. And, when the work is finished, after causing them to wait long before they receive the evidence of his approval, granting them the reward in such a way as to cause it to appear to be rather for their *faith* and *resignation* than their works.

Thus would He keep us dependent upon his mercy that no flesh may glory in his presence; and, as at the end of the different stages of our journey, so it will doubtless be at the close of time. In these considerations I have sometimes taken a degree of comfort, when strengthened to apply them to my own case.

In such moments as these my faith has been again graciously renewed in the mediation and power of our Almighty Redeemer; and with resignation to the divine will I have been enabled to surrender myself to the service of the Lord. Thus it has been in the course of my recent experience. Before I had fully accomplished my late engagements within our own Quarterly Meeting, I thought myself required to labour after resignation, to enter upon a much more extensive service.

The work here referred to was a journey to the Midland Counties, including a visit to the families of Friends in Bristol. He left home early in the Eleventh Month, and proceeded to Royston, and thence, through Huntingdonshire, into Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, holding meetings, both with Friends and the inhabitants generally, in many places as he passed along, of which no particular record is preserved. The following notice of some of the meetings held afterwards, in the same journey, has, however, been met with:—

11th mo.—On First-day morning I attended a meeting in Friends' meeting-house at Littleport, in which I had comfort. It was much crowded; and there seemed some seeking people, tender in spirit. In the evening I came to Ely: the Town-hall

not being considered eligible for our purpose, the Dissenting meeting-house was applied for, and readily obtained. Hearing that it was likely to be crowded, I went early: the yard was nearly full; and, when the doors were opened, the press was alarming beyond description, and very many went away for want of accommodation. It was some time before we got settled. My mind was not the most tranquil, but I endeavoured to do my best; and I trust there were some awakened, serious minds in the crowd, to whom, if I was anything, it was as a Barnabas rather than a Boanerges. I was so much concerned for the personal safety of the congregation that I was afraid to detain them as long as I might have done. I thought about proposing another meeting; but, not feeling it sufficiently as a duty, I forbore. We made a pretty large distribution of tracts; and there was great inquiry for more the next day. I was inclined to have the family at the inn collected before we went to rest, and was pleased with the opportunity. I read the three first chapters of Ephesians; and was never more sensible of that which we deem the unction: though it is one of my favourite epistles.

I had a meeting in view at Soham for the next evening, for which the necessary arrangements were made; but I seemed as if I could not proceed without going back to a village, Downham, that had attracted my attention as I went to Littleport. It was a great effort of faith to make the concern known to those who were with me; but, apprehending it was in the way of my duty, I gave up to it and went, under much discouragement, fearing we should not get the people together in the forenoon. But to my surprise the house was crowded; and to me it proved a very precious meeting, a time of real refreshment. I do not know when I have seen and felt the same degree of brokenness and tenderness. I trust we were enabled to give God the glory, and came away sweetly peaceful.

I reached Soham in good time in the evening: the house was full and overflowing. I was strengthened to labour in the love of Christ, so as to believe that I was preserved in

the way of my duty; but it was not like the morning. Many were serious, and some of them full of love, but my heart was not over-joyous. I heard that the teacher of a Socinian meeting held in the place was there: they have a neat, commodious meeting-house; but it is said (and thou wilt not be sorry to hear it) that he makes but little way, not more than ten or twelve in his congregation.

On Third-day evening I had a meeting in a village near Sutton, and the next day I spent among Friends there. On Fifth-day I came to Earith, and was at two meetings there. On Sixth-day evening at a meeting at Willingham held in a large granary. I was much discouraged before I went, from what I heard of the rude and uncivilised state of the people; and, when I arrived, from some apprehensions respecting the state of the building. But looking to the Rock of our strength, I found support; and I was enabled so to engage in my Great Master's service as to feel much more relief than I had hoped to obtain. The people were quiet, and the building stood well.

On Seventh-day I nearly finished my visit to the families of Friends. First-day was spent at Ives. The meeting in the evening was very large. I found much sweetness in the closing salutation in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Second-day I spent at Earith, not idly. Third-day was the Monthly Meeting there, in which I was strengthened and refreshed in spirit amongst my dear friends. That evening I was at a meeting at Colne, a small village about a mile distant. The evening was wet and dark; but the place was full, and I felt that which gave me to believe that our Great Master was with us. My way had been much closed up for two or three days as to that clearness respecting my future prospects which I wish to feel in all my proceedings; but in the course of that day there was a little breaking forth of light. The love ofChrist helped me to resignation, and the kindness of my friends was a great encouragement. Two meetings were appointed for the next day, at Earith and at Coddenham. At the last place the inhabitants seemed very much strangers to Friends: we had the use of a Dissenting meeting-house.

The congregation was large, and very much composed of country people, most of them serious and attentive; a door of utterance was opened; and I thought I was sensible that the word obtained some entrance. I had to believe there were tender spirits alive to that which we esteem most precious. How truly animating to meet with such, whatever may be their exterior as to forms or opinions, who know the want of Christ.

I was stirring early next morning, and, riding my little mare through rough and wet roads, came eight or nine miles to Fenstanton, where I found a meeting appointed, in which, though the accommodation was not suited to the season, I could not but admire the seriousness of many of the people, and had a hope that we did not meet in vain. I met with a circumstance after meeting with which I was much affected, nay, I should say afflicted. A gentleman of the town accosted me, and with much apparent cordiality expressed a sort of approbation of the meeting. I soon heard he was a strong Socinian. It brought me into indescribable anxiety lest I should, in any degree, have lowered the standard of the Truth as it is in Jesus. But, after close examination, believing I had been preserved on that hand, I had some little comfort in my low estate; and I thought that Christ was made more precious to me than ever. In the evening I was at a meeting at Hemingford—a large gathering; the people were quiet, and, I trust, serious. The "clergyman" of the village is said to be very attentive to the best interests of his parishioners; and I could not help thinking that something might be seen of the effects of his exertions.

After mentioning some other meetings which he attended in Northamptonshire, he says, in a letter

To Sarah Hustler.

11th mo. 14th. Stoke Newton, Oxfordshire.—My visit in Northamptonshire, which had been a long course of arduous

and laborious exercise, was closed with a quiet, and I hope it is not too much to say a peaceful, mind. And having entered a fresh field of labour, I trust I have been permitted to enjoy a little of that precious sense of life in a few favoured moments which strengthens the hope that my tarriance in Northamptonshire was not beyond the right time, and that through condescending mercy and goodness I am still in the way of my duty.

22nd. Hereford.—I am just returned from a meeting in the Town-hall in this city, a time of deep suffering, and, through divine mercy and help, of subsequent relief and encouragement; so that, notwithstanding a few hours ago my heart was ready to fail me, and I was almost ready to cast aside my shield, yet now, through the renewings of holy aid, I desire to labour with more perfect resignation to the divine will and a more entire devotedness to the Lord's service, no more to distrust Him who has been so good to me, upholding, strengthening, and comforting my discouraged and often tempted and conflicting mind.

From Hereford he pursued his course towards Bristol, where he was about to join in a visit to the families of Friends. On arriving in that city he writes

To J. J. Gurney.

1816. *2nd mo. 27th.*—I came to Bristol this morning, and went almost immediately to meeting, where I found my two colleagues, who came to town yesterday, and was truly glad to take my seat beside them. I thought there was a very sweet and solemn feeling in the meeting; and I was strengthened to lay hold on it as an evidence that our proposed engagement is in the ordering of Him whom we desire to serve. I anticipate much conflict of mind, many deep plunges into my own unworthiness and manifold infirmities and corruptions. If such should be my portion, and, under the Divine blessing, be made the means of driving me to the footstool of Divine

grace, I cannot wish to be spared the suffering—indeed, I believe I should be alarmed for my safety if such feelings did not come upon me; for I find that it is only as I descend into my weakness that I can rejoice in Him who is the resurrection and the life. How truly precious it is experimentally to know the Lord Jesus in this most blessed and glorious character! May it, my beloved friend, become increasingly our case!

Of this engagement at Bristol, and a subsequent visit to most of the meetings of Friends in that Quarterly Meeting, as well as his Christian labours amongst the inhabitants of various towns and villages, which occupied William Forster till near the time of the Yearly Meeting, no record appears. Soon after that he was again pursuing his work amongst Friends and others in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Reference is made to this visit in a letter to a friend, dated Ninth Month 21st, 1816:—

I thought it a favour, for which I trust I was not altogether unthankful, that I could believe that holy help was granted for my assistance and support in the journey I took into Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, soon after I parted from thee. I visited the families in Witney Monthly Meeting, and had many public meetings.

I wish I may never forget the feelings with which I was affected as I drew near the close of the visit. How much I then saw of the excellency of the truth as it is in Jesus; and how fully the whole man was then offered up and devoted to the service of the Lord! I could not regret a single hour I had passed in doing what I believed to be his will; nor any one of the little sacrifices I had made of personal ease and comfort in dedicating myself to the Gospel.

CHAPTER XVII.

HIS MARRIAGE, AND RETIREMENT TO BRADPOLE.

It will be recollected that William Forster first spoke in public as a preacher of the Gospel before he was twenty, and that two years later he was duly recognised as an approved minister of Christ in the religious Society of Friends. Almost immediately after that, he began to travel about in his blessed Master's service; and eleven years had now been spent, with very little intermission, in the work of the ministry from home. During that time he had visited nearly all parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and the adjacent islands, and laboured abundantly in proclaiming "the unsearchable riches of Christ," both among his own community and the people at large. Much as he had felt the privilege of having the parental roof to retire to during the short intervals between one religious engagement and another, and largely as he had partaken of the comfort of thus mingling with the family group at Tottenham, he had not hitherto had any separate home of his own. A happy matrimonial union with one of a kindred spirit, and, like himself, a devoted follower and servant of Christ, was now about to place him in the midst of the sweets of domestic life, and to afford him a brief period of rest from labour.

He had for some years been well acquainted with Anna Buxton, and it was to her that he had made

proposals which were favourably received. She was the eldest daughter of Thomas Fowell and Anna Buxton, of Earl's Colne, Essex. On her mother's second marriage, Anna removed with her to Weymouth, near which place her grandmother also resided. Though by birth a member of the Society, she had not been brought up as a Friend, but was early taught the accomplishments and introduced into the gaieties of fashionable life. Weymouth was at that time the favourite resort of George III.; and the king and royal family not unfrequently visited at Bellfield, the country residence of her paternal grandmother, beautifully situated near the town, commanding fine views of Weymouth Bay and the island of Portland.* Anna Buxton was then a fine, lovely girl, of remarkably refined and elegant manners; and George III., for whom she never ceased to retain a sort of filial reverence and love, noticed her with much kindness and affability; while the unconstrained intercourse allowed her with the royal family made her familiar with the incidents of their domestic life. Her natural vivacity, and the kindliness of a heart that delighted to please, added to a well-cultivated understanding and a peculiarly delicate taste, gave her a very attractive position in the circle in which it was her lot to move. But continued intercourse with the fashionable world soon lost its power to charm; the ball-room and the dance, with the excitement of musical entertainments, yielded only a temporary gratification, and often left a sting of dissatisfaction behind. Without any marked human instrumentality,

* See "Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton," chap. i.

strong religious convictions had already taken hold of her mind; and these were confirmed by the death of her first cousin, Elizabeth Gurney (wife of John Gurney, jun., of Earlham), to whom she was warmly attached. In the midst of all her earthly enjoyments, she felt that there were objects far higher to claim her earnest pursuit; under the influence of the quickening Spirit, the love of the Saviour had touched her heart, and she found no rest except at the feet of Jesus, and in obedience to her Heavenly Father's will. She made a noble resolve—a decided choice. Cheerfully enlisting under the banner of Christ, his yoke became easy, and his burden light. She found her chief delight in his service. And she was only *one* of an interesting little band of young disciples who, about the same time, and under similar circumstances, had a mighty change wrought in their hearts and in their lives, by the power of the same Spirit. Created anew in Christ Jesus, they could rejoice together in the truth, that, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." The world, with all its blandishments and allurements, could no longer hold them in bondage. They were blessed together in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and they were made a blessing one unto the other in the truth as it is in Him. Nor is it easy now to take in all that "God had wrought" for them, or to estimate the influence for good which they were enabled, through his grace, to shed around them, in the Church and in the world. Of this number was Elizabeth J. Fry, her sister Priscilla Gurney, and her brothers Samuel and Joseph John Gurney, Hannah C. Gurney (afterwards Backhouse), and

Maria Barclay (afterwards Fox), with others of the Earlham and of the Grove families, and of the descendants of the Apologist.* They all "put their hands to the plough" about the same time, and none of them "looked back." They all became devoted servants of Christ; they all "held fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;" they all "finished their course with joy." Anna Buxton was peculiarly beloved by them all. "The meeting with Rachel Gurney and Anna Buxton," writes H. C. Gurney (Backhouse), in 1808, "was agitatingly interesting; but in the midst of it a peace and satisfaction which are indeed an abundant recompense. Dear Anna returned with me: we were silent during the ride; I felt nearly united to her. How sweet it is to feel that degree of union, which, I firmly believe, if we continue faithful, will increase in time, and be made sure in eternity!"

William Forster's early devotedness as a minister of Christ nearly coincided with these interesting and important changes among his young friends in Norfolk and elsewhere. They all loved and esteemed him very highly, and it would be hard to say to what extent his example and ministry were made a blessing to them. Anna Buxton's companionship with Elizabeth Fry, in her visits to Newgate, and in her general prison labours, was doubtless among the means of affording a favourable opportunity to William Forster for observing and appreciating her character; for he himself was a frequent adviser and helper in these early efforts to improve the

* See their respective memoirs; and an interesting biographical sketch of Maria Fox, in the *Annual Monitor* for 1859.

prison discipline, and to promote the temporal and spiritual advantage of the poor prisoners. At that time Anna Buxton had become the matured Christian, and was giving proof both as a minister of the gospel, and in the ordinary affairs of life, of those peculiar excellencies—that love of truth, that womanly tenderness in sympathising with suffering of every kind, and that Christian firmness and perseverance with which she sought to relieve it—for which she was so much distinguished throughout her course.

The manner in which William Forster viewed his present position and prospects was quite in keeping with his whole character as a man and a Christian. In allusion to their approaching union, he writes

To A. B.

1816. *7th mo. 14th.*—How sweetly comforting is the belief that our heavenly Father can draw his children into nearer acquaintance with himself, by loading them with his benefits as well as by visiting them with his judgments. I think I have felt a little of this in the prospect now opening before us of future comfort. It has brought me to feel so much of my unworthiness, and my utter inability to make the return of gratitude adequate to the blessing, that I believe it has had a profitable effect, and of late has tended much to the strengthening of my desire that our union may be in the Lord; that we may receive each other as his gift, and enjoy the blessing in his love, and with a reverent sense of our dependence upon Him.

But, although I have this hope, yet at other times my fears are many, lest I should not be able to leave all when it may please the Lord again to make the offer, in his mercy, to lead me forth, and to grant me renewed experience of his grace in the gospel of his Son. My great comfort is, that my dearest

friend is bound to the same cause, that she can understand the nature of these conflicts, and that, being taught to look to the same Source, she will receive supplies adequate to the exercise of her faith. Such feelings as these were very much with me as I drew near to the close of my late journey.

I have often heard others speak of rejoicing at putting off the harness, but that was not my case; for, although I had scarcely ever known what it was to return with the prospect of enjoying rest in domestic comfort, yet, having at that time such a very high sense of the nature of the calling, and still apprehending that my measure of service and suffering in the cause of the gospel was not yet filled up, at the same time feeling that I was about to enter into new cares and new comforts, I could not but fear for myself; and sometimes, with awful trembling, I was enabled at least to desire, if not to pray, that I might still be kept watchfully devoted to the service of my great Master.

To Sarah Hustler.

Tottenham, 9th mo. 21st.—I could hardly have thought that taking and furnishing a house could have engrossed so much of my mind; but yet I feel that I have cause for much gratitude in being, through best help, from one time to another lifted above them, and permitted to behold a little of the excellent glory of those heavenly things, before which the best and happiest earthly state is lighter than vanity.

I have now nearly accomplished all that seemed necessary, for the present, about the furniture of the house. I approve of plainness and simplicity, and have endeavoured to keep the first in view, and my conscience does not trouble me much for deviations in regard to the latter. I am inclined to think that the more I had kept John Woolman's views in my eye as our pattern, the better dear Anna would have been pleased.

I must now introduce thee in imagination to our little dwelling; how much I wish to do it in person I will not say. In the first place, fancy thyself on the road from Bridport to

Beaminster; and, about a mile out of town, turn down to the right into a pleasant scattered village; and, passing through two or three short lanes, the road neither good nor very bad, thou wilt arrive at our door. Our cottage is a plain-built stone house, thatched roof and casement windows; one end comes to the footpath alongside the road. In front we have a neat forecourt; at the back a small orchard, and at the other end I hope to make a good garden. There are two parlours; one of them a neat snug room, not very large; the other I think may be improved and made very habitable. There is a small light room for a store-closet, and a comfortable kitchen. There are four lodging-rooms on the second floor—I think of converting one of them into a sitting-room—and we have also good garrets. The only objection is the distance of a mile and a-half from meeting. I endeavoured seriously to look at it, but after all could not see a home elsewhere; and had a hope that we should be enabled to get through the little difficulties which might attend.

They were married early in the Tenth Month, 1816, at Shaftesbury, in Dorsetshire, and took up their abode at the comfortable residence so graphically described above. The similarity of their views on Divine truth, and of their experience of the effectual workings of the Spirit of God; their faith in the immediate puttings forth of the heavenly Shepherd, and the strength derived from the mutual encouragement to surrender themselves to the work and service of the Lord, lightened the pain of separation which was often their lot, and at the same time it increased their joy in the Lord—a blessing which was, in a remarkable degree, their experience to the end of their sojourn together on earth.

About two months after their settlement at Bradpole, William Forster, in writing to J. J. Gurney, after alluding to the affliction of his "dear and

worthy friends" Joseph and Jane Gurney, on account of the loss of a son, and their "calm and Christian submission to the Divine will," makes the following interesting remarks :—

1816. *Bradpole, 12th mo. 13th.*—It is thus, it has sometimes appeared to me, that our Heavenly Father is pleased to grant his believing and obedient children a token of his love. He afflicts them and lays them low. He makes them feel their dependence upon himself. They call upon his name, and then, in unutterable mercy He inclines his ear to their cry, He causes the light of his countenance to shine upon them, and they are made abundantly glad in his salvation. Thus I have believed that, whether He visits us in judgment or in mercy, all his dealings with us are with one and the same ultimate object in view,—the increase of our acquaintance with Himself, the increase of our love to Him, and our more entire establishment in that faith which would enable us to hold out to the end.

In my earlier days I had many trials; my path in life has, to my own apprehension, been marked with much exercise of faith and filial dependence. Often did I seem to myself a pilgrim on the earth without any certain dwelling-place, and sometimes like one moving round a large circumference without an outward centre. In those days I reaped the benefit of many sufferings, in being taught to look towards that rest which is in Christ Jesus our Lord as my ultimate home. The principal object of my life was to fulfil what I believed to be the whole will of God; and I scarcely had a wish to be detained a day longer in this world, than to be brought to that day in which I could believe it to be accomplished.

But now, in abundant goodness, the case is greatly altered. Blessings, temporal and spiritual, are poured forth in such plenty upon me, that I am laden and weighed down with benefits, scarcely able to lift up the soul with full gratitude to the Father of all mercies. Yet in this I would rejoice, because I am brought to feel my weakness and my poverty, to feel that

all my help is in God, all my springs in the riches of his bounty and love ; and that without his assistance I can neither serve nor worship Him.

All our dear friends seem to fancy us very happy in our little cottage, and rich in the enjoyment of each other's company ; and, truly, they are not mistaken. Our comforts are almost without alloy. The retirement (nearly amounting to seclusion) of our allotment, insufferable as it would be to many, gives us an opportunity for rest ; such an one as I little expected ever to enjoy, and in which I feel there is great need of watchfulness and prayer, lest it should have a tendency to settle me down in spiritual indolence and indifference. On our first coming here, I was a little uneasy at being without an object of outward pursuit and attention, (though I must say, and thou wilt believe me, that, in every possible way to increase the comfort and enjoyment of a dear and most affectionate wife, is a duty and pleasure of all others most satisfying and delightful to me) ; but I already feel there was not much need of this anxiety. There is enough for us to do. Our poor neighbours are in the extreme of indigence ; and there seems scarcely any one to care for their wants, which it will be our privilege and great enjoyment in some degree to alleviate. My beloved Anna and myself are increasingly satisfied, not only that this is a safe and suitable situation for us, but, when seriously engaged in desire for right direction, have, I think invariably had the belief that we are providentially settled here, and that it is the place of our safety and comfort.

The multiplied objects of interest connected with his new sphere were not allowed to interrupt intimate communion with his absent friends ; and a few months later he writes :—

To ———.

1817. *8th mo. 11th.*—There is nothing for which I feel more earnest solicitude upon my own account, and for those

most dear to me, than that we may grow in the sensible experience of the life of Christ, quickening, strengthening, supporting, and comforting our souls, that we may draw nearer to that state in which this precious feeling may be regarded as our spiritual meat, and that we may be more anxious for renewed supplies of this sustaining virtue than for any other enjoyment. O that this life—that *Christ Himself*—may more and more dwell in me, rule within, and regulate all without: that his righteousness may be my righteousness; and that, all my attempts at religious dedication being under the influence of his Spirit, they may be graciously accepted as *service* to Him, my Lord and Master. My great deficiency in these attainments is often a discouragement to me.

I am not enough patient in my waiting upon the Lord, and far from approving myself that meek and self-denying disciple which, in my better moments, I most earnestly wish to be. There is nothing to me more excellent in the principles and practices of Friends, next to faith in the sufficiency of Christ, and as necessarily consequent upon it, than the frequency enjoined upon us of waiting upon the Lord. How much does it conduce to our preservation, and how much to our growth? Were it more general among us, what a living, spiritual people should we be! But what conflict of mind have we to pass through in reaching to this state of humble watchfulness, and how remarkably are the love and mercy of our heavenly Father made manifest, in sometimes gently drawing us to this state of quiet dependence upon Himself. That thou and I may know more of this is much my present desire.

To ———.

Bradpole, 9th mo. 27th.—Though I move in but a contracted sphere, worldly cares have sufficient influence over me, and sometimes, I fear, take the place of that exercise of mind in which I would wish to be found more frequent—that of patient waiting for the renewings of divine light and strength, to

enable me to discover the path of duty for the present day, and that I may be endued with power faithfully to acquit myself of that which may be laid upon me. But sometimes, through the abounding of Divine mercy, the dayspring from on high is made to break forth upon me, and I am brought renewedly to feel the excellency of those truths of which I have been allowed to speak in days that are past.

I think I can truly say that the Gospel is as precious to me as ever; and not unfrequently is my heart enlarged in desire that these blessed tidings may be carried, in their own purity and simplicity, to the very ends of the earth. I have sometimes thought I could discover a little of the same disposition in myself as was in the apostle, when he spoke of his desire to preach Christ where He had not been named; and so it continues to be. My path looks like an untrodden one. I cannot at present see where it may lead me, whether out of our own nation, or not beyond the confines of our own country. Yet if I have much more to do in the body, it does seem that it must be in the same way that I have hitherto had to make proof of my dedication; at present I see but little. Perhaps all I have to do is to stand in waiting, seeking to have my loins girt, and ready to obey when I may be favoured to hear the summons.

On receiving the account of the death of Sarah Hustler, he writes

To Robert Jowitt.

Bradpole, 11th mo. 18th.—She was a friend so dear and valuable to me, I had found her so unalterably faithful, and I enjoyed such perfect confidence in her friendship, that when I came to bring it home to my feelings that she was really gone, that I should see her no more, that I should no more enjoy the help and comfort of her sympathy and counsel, it was truly a bereavement not easily to be borne.

How gladly would I have sought some relief to my sorrow, by joining her many friends in performing the last duty to the

dear remains; but it seemed to me, and I believe it was, impraeticable. In the forepart of that day there was something like a bright gleam of light broke through the cloud; and, in some imperfeet sense of fellowship with her redeemed and purified spirit, I was enabled to worship the Father in thanksgiving and praise. All selfish feeling of my own privations was lost in eontemplating that state of unalloyed and everlasting felicity upon whieh I felt persuaded that she had entered. To us who remain in this state of eonflict, standing on the earth, it might seem that, like the favoured prophet, she was taken up in a whirlwind. We were forbidden to follow her through the eloud by which she was hidden from our view: to our eyes it was dark and heavy; but I could not but think that, were it given us to look through the cloud, how bright and glorious would all appear. What a blessed exehange from a feeble and pain-worn tabernacle to an everlasting resting-plaee in the bosom of her Lord. Thus it was mueh with me at that time; the impression was indeseribably sweet, and the instruetion imparted by the event was sueh as will, I trust, remain with me. It was instruetion, animating me to watehfulness and obedience for the present day, and teaehing me yet more to regard this life as a state of pilgrimage to another and a better state of being.

The latter part of Phil. i. 23 was very mueh on my mind during the day: "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, whieh is far better." The eonsolation I derived in meditating upon it in referenee to dear S. H. was most sweet and strengthening to my faith. Mueh as she had known of the blessedness of that peaee and joy with whieh the Lord is pleased to enrieh the souls of his devoted and dependent ehildren; mueh as I believe she would have been willing, and more than willing, to have spent the residue of her days, even if they had been lengthened out to extreme old age, in earrying the message of redeeming love and power as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord, into whatsoever corner of the earth her feet might be direeted; and mueh as it would have rejoieed her to have lived and seen those amongst us that she loved, and for whom her very soul was poured forth, growing up and walking

in the Truth, yet her heart was so raised above the world, her affections so much set upon the things which are eternal, her love and union with Christ so firm and constant, that she could say through all, that to depart at any hour and be with Him, at whatsoever period of life the release might be granted, would be far better.

To Elizabeth Fry.

We have just been sitting together according to our usual practice on Third-day evening, when it was pleasant to have thee brought to my remembrance in very affectionate love, as is often the case with me. In my most serious moments I greatly enjoy to be made sensible of some feeling of that unity of spirit, which might encourage me to believe that I am still counted worthy of discipleship to our great Lord and Master.

What a strength and comfort hast thou been to me when my faith has been ready to sink, and discouragements have almost swallowed me up. Now that I may seem in great measure to have been permitted to retreat from the field of active service, I feel that I want the help of the spirits of those that can sympathize with me, and their prayers also, that I may be strengthened to maintain the warfare, to keep in a state of resignation to the divine will, by humble watchfulness and constant dedication, acceptably to walk before the Lord in the limited sphere of action in which I trust his providence has placed me.

To whatever other weakness I may be tempted in my present state, I do not think I am inclined to spend my little strength by laying myself too much open to my friends. Yet to thee I may say, that since my return home my state has been for the most part that of great unprofitableness, and I think unworthiness, attended with deeply self-abasing views of my infirmities and temptations. I have now and then had a glimpse of light on my path, and there have been moments of favour in which I have felt the stability of that foundation on which I have desired to stand. Yet there has been often

a secret intimation to set my house in order, that I may be ready to obey the summons; but how hard will it be to leave my dearest companion in life, when I have all that I could wish to find in a wife.

To Samuel Capper.

I had a letter from thy sister Katherine a few days ago, in which she intimated to me thy prospect of going into Gloucestershire and Somersetshire, I conclude under an apprehension of religious duty. I have thought so much of thee since I received this information, that I believe I shall not be doing wrong to make some short expression of my love and earnest desire for thy safety and comfort in the journey before thee.

I can easily believe that it has been no light thing to thee, and that at times thou art brought very low under a feeling of thy weakness, and the solemn nature of thy engagement. In this, I trust I may say, I have unity with thee. I seem as if I could rejoice over thy humble, fearful, trembling steps, both in thy going forth and to the end of thy engagement. I am much encouraged to believe that thou wilt at times feel the presence of the Lord to be with thee, and with those thou mayest be led to visit, to thy refreshment and confirmation. O! the sweetness, the peace and comfort, of a lowly, tender, broken, contrite heart! How great is the blessedness of a watchful, devoted and circumspect walking with God! How is this made a savour of life unto life among those with whom we associate, and an encouragement to such as are sensible of the visitations of divine grace, to persevere in the right way of the Lord!

If such be thy favoured experience in the impending visit, let thy words be few or many, I cannot but believe it will be cheering and strengthening to Friends, and tend to the enlargement of thy experience in the sufficiency of the divine power; and to be thus favoured of the Lord is, as I believe thou canst acknowledge, to be blessed with a reward in heavenly treasure.

If I have one wish for thee more earnest than another, it is that thou mayest be kept retired in spirit, and near to that precious life by which we are brought into feeling with others, and enabled to speak, as it may be given us, a word in season to their state.

If at times thy path seem to thee to be rough and difficult, if but little is felt of that by which thou hast been put forth; or if it seem totally withdrawn; if clouds and darkness intercept thy sensible access to the holy footstool, may the Lord preserve thee in patience and deep waiting in spirit before Him. Thus, I trust, whatever be the exercises of thy faith, that light will be vouchsafed sufficient to direct thy steps; and whether thou abound or have to suffer need, thou wilt find good cause to acknowledge that it was well for thee thus to be given up to serve the Lord.

In the early part of 1818, Anna Forster felt it to be her duty to unite with her cousin, Priscilla Gurney, in paying a religious visit to Friends in Ireland. William Forster accompanied his wife to Holyhead, whence she proceeded with her beloved companion to Dublin. Of his own engagements during his wife's absence, no particular account is preserved; but he appears to have spent some time among Friends in Lancashire and Cheshire, and the following letters were written about that time:—

To ———.

I do not doubt but already Friends are better understood in many places than they were a few years ago. I often feel a wish that, in what may seem to us to be much more a day of good report than that in which our forefathers gave proof of their faith by long-protracted suffering, not merely by the reviling and persecution of the world, but from the contempt of the serious professors of Christianity, from whom we might have hoped for better things, we may be upon the watch that

we make no compromise of the simplicity and the spirituality of our religion, in endeavouring to come into a more perfect accordance with those whose kindness and liberality of sentiment may be gratifying to us, and in whom we see so much to admire, and which we would wish to imitate.

I am not much afraid for thee in this respect. Thou hast bought thy inheritance among us by many sacrifices of obedience which have cost thee much. Thou hast tried the ground and found those things which the world, and even many of the wise and excellent of the earth, may be tempted to call foolishness, to have their reward, in more entirely separating us to the Lord, and preparing us to become subject to his pure and peaceable reign within us.

He had heard that his beloved friend, Stephen Grellet, was engaged in religious service among Friends in New England Yearly Meeting and some other parts, previous to his third visit to Europe. The following letter is characteristic of the feelings which he loved to cherish towards his fellow labourers in the Gospel:—

To Stephen Grellet.

Since thy return to America I have often visited thee in the feeling of affectionate love and sympathy, not only rejoicing in the rest permitted thee in the bosom of thy dear family, but sometimes, I trust, desiring to feel for thee in those exercises which have been permitted to come upon thee to the proving of thy faith, and I do not doubt to the establishing of thy confidence still more firmly on that rock which cannot be shaken. In this the dependent and devoted children of our Heavenly Father find a stronghold in time of trouble, a refuge to which they may flee when afflictions, like an overwhelming torrent poured out upon them, may seem ready to carry before them all in which they may have been allowed to rejoice as the work of the Almighty hand in his new creation

within them. To know that there is such a refuge, and to be rightly directed in our endeavours to attain to it, are among the best of those spiritual blessings granted us in our present probationary state. What should we do without such a stay, such an anchor and resting-place under the trials of our pilgrimage through life. We want it at every turn in our heights and depths, in our outward troubles as well as in our spiritual conflicts.

I cannot doubt, my beloved friend, that this divine support is often revealed for thy help, that thou dost sensibly feel the heavenly unction to descend and abide with thee, and art enabled by its strengthening virtue to trust in the Lord, and to hope in his mercy with thy whole heart, to commit thyself unreservedly to his gracious protection, and acceptably to intercede for those most near to thee in life. I have been ready to conclude it might be the design of Infinite Wisdom, that after thy long-continued course of dedication in his service, the remainder of thy measure should be filled up by suffering; that, as in many other instances, He might be pleased to make his power manifest by upholding and comforting thee in thy tribulations, and thus enable thee by instructive example to set thy seal to the doctrine He has enabled thee livingly to preach.

But He has seen meet to order it otherwise, and again called upon thee to prepare for active service. I suppose thou hast already entered upon a field of this description eastward. In this, my dear friend, thou hast my sympathy; and such is the sweet feeling of fellowship I enjoy with thee in this dedication, that I am much encouraged to believe it is a sacrifice that will be blessed both to thyself and to others, to thy own confirmation, and the encouragement of those for whom thou mayest be exercised; that, being supported thyself, thou wilt be made instrumental to the consolation of others by that same love and power wherewith thou art comforted of God. Never was my mind more with the willing and devoted of the Lord, those who, in love to Him and to his cause, are submitting themselves unreservedly to the working of his power in their redemption, and, waiting patiently for his instruction,

are in simple obedience and living faith given up to serve Him in those things, and in that way, which He is opening to them.

Anna Forster having accomplished the labour of love which had drawn her from home, her husband met her at Milford Haven, on her return from Ireland; and, during their homeward journey, and after their safe arrival at Bradpole, he writes:—

To Isaac Crewdson.

Eversholt, *Fifth Month 24th, 1818.*

Through the kindness of a merciful Providence, we are now within twelve miles of the end of our journey.

I believe thou lovest us both quite enough to rejoice with us in our many mercies, especially that I was permitted to meet my dearest Anna better than I had any reason to expect after her long travel, and her trying passage to Milford; and that we have been favoured to accomplish our journey by slow travelling with but little difficulty, and very much to our mutual enjoyment. Thou canst understand a little what we must have had to give up in our endeavours to stand resigned to what we believed to be the call of the Lord in our late engagements. But much as it was, now the reward is so abundantly dispensed, that I am sure we have great cause to say it was none too much. It was unutterable condescension in our Heavenly Father, a distinguishing mark of his divine favour, to count us worthy in any degree to partake in the love of the gospel of Christ; and now, after having desired to stay with patience the fulness of time, we have it given us to enjoy what we may acknowledge to be manifold more in this present life; and our hope for that which is to come is not lessened by these little acts of faith and love.

May we ever live in remembrance of the merciful kindness of our gracious Lord, and be increasingly animated to hope and trust in Him; and yet more than ever, in the fulness of

dedieation, offer ourselves up to Him, and his disposal in all things.

I very mueh feel returning to my every-day duties and home cares, and never was more desirous that whether I have little or mueh of the eoneerns of this life devolving upon me all may be done to the glory of God; that through the renewings of divine graee, I may grow in that meekness, gentleness, and true quietness of spirit, which so very mueh beeome the followers of our Holy Redeemer, and that my walk through the paths of eommon life may evinee that I feel the importanee of those truths which, under what I have believed to be the love of Christ, I have so mueh desired to impress on the minds of others.

Fourth-day morning.—We reaehed our peaeeful habitation about the time we had proposed to ourselves on Second-day. . . . . To be rightly given up to the serviee of the Yearly Meeting is, I believe, an aeeeptable saerifiee; and one mueh blessed to those eounted worthy to engage in it. But what deep watehfulness of spirit does it require that all self-will, all undue ereaturely activity, and every appearanee of that hateful evil of our eorrupt nature whieh we eall spiritual pride, should be kept subjeet to the yoke and government of Christ; that nothing but his will, his love, and his power, may be suffered to appear for the furtheranee of the work of the Lord. O, the blessedness of this subjected, devoted, and passive state of feeling! may I and all my dear friends labour after it, and wait for it.

Anna Forster had been absent about three months, and, looking back upon her late engagements in Ireland, she could make this grateful acknowledgment:—

Many were the mereies I experieneed there in my weakness, and under those spiritual eonfliets brought upon me on my own aeeount and for others. In these I had to believe I was not left to myself, but was afresh eneouraged to seek for heavenly strength, and favoured to obtain it, from Him who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust.

And, after alluding to the "kindness and sympathy of many dear friends in Ireland," and the "strengthening and comforting union" with her beloved cousin Priscilla Gurney in the service, she was enabled to add:—

The remembrance of these mercies, and especially that of being restored to my beloved husband and comfortable habitation, makes me ready afresh to say, O! that we may praise the Lord for his goodness.

Not long after this, William Forster was deeply interested in the movements of his beloved friend William Allen, who was about to join Stephen Grellet, lately arrived from America, in a religious visit to Norway, Russia, &c. After alluding to his wife's return, he writes

To William Allen.

Truly, my dear friend, though we do not just now feel the burthen to rest heavily upon us, yet there are many apprehensions that in this respect the work is not fully accomplished. O! that it may go forward within us, and if it should please the Lord, through us also, by the help of the same power by which we trust it was begun,—so that in all things his name may be exalted, and that no halting nor reluctance, any more than an impatient activity of spirit, may deprive us of the crown which is prepared for them that hold out to the end of their race.

It has been very much to my encouragement to be made sensible of such fulness of unity as I have felt on this occasion; and such depth of interest both in near brotherly affection towards thee, my dear friend, and in the visit you have in prospect. Perhaps it can do no harm in the freedom with which my heart is opened towards thee and dear Stephen, to say that so strong were the flowings of love, and such my

sympathy with sincere seeking people in Norway, &c., about two years ago, and so much did it dwell with me, that I was often ready to believe my day's work would not be complete without being given up to go into those countries. But now the weight of this work is very much, if not entirely, removed; and I can thankfully rejoice that brethren I prefer so very much before myself are separated for the service. You will, I trust, meet with some serious Christian characters; but how far they may be seeking for further knowledge of the Truth will be seen. But it is a precious thing to be able to rejoice over the work of the Lord in the hearts of his children in whatever stage of progress it may be, and under whatever form we may meet with it. I feel a deep interest respecting Sweden as well as Norway. And if nothing else is effected, I shall be glad to find thou art able to make arrangements for the translation of some of our tracts into that language. I cannot say how much I feel in contemplating the work which Infinite Wisdom may be pleased to carry on in those Northern nations through the simplest means, and how much my heart is in this cause.

It is a favour to me that I am not now perplexed with doubts respecting myself and my own line of duty. Home seems my right allotment for the present; and I think the command is as imperative to stand still, as ever I could believe it was to go forth. But how long this may be the case must be left; many apprehensions attend me that a day of laborious and exercising service is not far distant. It has already dawned in prospect; and many are the conflicts of mind in endeavouring after that state of resignation in which alone I can hope for strength and preservation.

The birth of a son, soon after this time, seemed to render William and Anna Forster's domestic enjoyments complete; and, for a while, their cup of happiness appeared to be full, whilst their hearts overflowed with thankfulness to the author of their blessings. But a little later a time of close trial was

permitted, in the illness of Anna Forster, from which, however, she soon recovered. In reference to this, William Forster writes

To Robert Jowitt.

10th mo. 31st.—I am more than ever satisfied in the persuasion that there is no affliction brought upon us, no trial of any kind, outward or inward, but it is the gracious will of our Almighty Father that it should be made subservient to our spiritual, our eternal good, to the humbling and subjection of our will, and the strengthening and establishing of our faith; to our more full preparation to glorify Him in our obedience and resignation here, and in the fulness of filial love, and with unceasing praise, hereafter.

O! for a mind more resigned to receive and kiss the rod, and a heart more devoted to serve and follow the Lord Christ, in whatever path He may be pleased to lead, and that with simple, unreasoning, unhesitating obedience.

About this time he writes to a young friend, respecting whom he felt much interested :—

I wish just to tell thee of my love, and in a few words to express my desire that nothing may prevent thee from continuing to serve the Lord, and trusting in Him at all times, that so, according to his mercy in Christ Jesus, thou mayest taste more and more of his goodness; and hence thy experience be enlarged in the sufficiency of his power to support and protect thee under all the discouragements and temptations with which thou mayest be tried.

I need not tell thee that many are the humiliations and conflicts of spirit which the patient, devoted follower of the Lamb must expect to meet with in the course of his pilgrimage. So certainly is it the experience of the children of the Lord, that they may accept his chastenings as an unequivocal assurance of his regard to them, and a satisfactory evidence that He is mindful of the work He has begun within

them; and that he would so work, through these means, as to accomplish the end of their complete sanctification.

If thou find thou hast still to walk in a narrow path, more narrow than some can comprehend; if thou find thyself still beset with secret buffetings, and borne down with discouragement, may it be thy prayer to the Lord that He will keep thy feet steadfast in the path that He has appointed thee, and so strengthen thee in the warfare as that none of thy enemies shall prevail against thee. I cannot tell thee how much I feel this for thee; how earnestly I desire that thou mayest not forsake the place of true waiting, nor become weary of watching. It is indeed my prayer that thou mayest grow in humility, resignation, obedience and meekness of spirit.

O! dear ——, wait upon the Lord from day to day, that thou mayest feel his power to work within thee, to bring thee into a broken, tender, contrite, teachable state of mind. Be willing to continue a little child, to be but a babe in Christ. Let this be thy exercise, and I cannot doubt but all will be well; the Lord will be thy teacher, thy leader, and thy helper. He will yet more evidently set his mark upon thee, and others will see yet more clearly that He is with thee.

To another friend who had lately changed his residence :—

I shall be glad to hear that on thy return to thy native town thou art favoured to find it agreeable to thy inclination and truly comfortable, and that thy prospects in business are promising. Having had things of the greatest moment principally in thy view for many years, I do not allow myself to doubt but that, with all thy changes, thy mind is still directed with the greatest earnestness to the pursuit of heavenly treasure.

What encouragement do we receive in the persuasion that, in seeking after an increasing conformity to the divine will, and in labouring after a state of more perfect dedication of heart to the Lord, whatever may be our outward circumstances, our watching and waiting before Him in humble,

patient prayer, will never be in vain. It is this that I desire for myself and all my dear friends, that, as we advance in years, we may become more inward, retired, and devoted to the love and service of God, and thus grow in experience of the sufficiency of his saving strength, and be increasingly comforted with hope in his mercy.

Apart from his correspondence, the materials for this chapter, embracing a period of about two years and a half of William Forster's married life, are but scanty. To the thoughtful reader, however, these records can hardly have failed to illustrate some new and deeply interesting points of his character. In the retirement of the domestic circle, with all the added comforts and enjoyments of conjugal and parental happiness, it is instructive to contemplate him—not as seeking to take up his rest in personal gratification, but walking humbly before God, in the attitude of almost constant watchfulness and prayer, casting an eye forward, and dwelling upon the yet unaccomplished work of the Lord that awaited him, desiring even "to preach Christ where he had not been named."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISCLOSURE OF A PROSPECT TO VISIT AMERICA, ETC.

Turning to the interesting "Memoir of Priscilla Gurney," * we meet with the following record :—

1818. *First-day, 12th mo. 27th.*—"I received the interesting, affecting, and yet, in one sense, comforting intelligence, that William Forster has a prospect of visiting America. It is animating and striking to see faith triumph over nature."

Under the circumstances brought into view in the last chapter, it might well be called a triumph of faith to be made willing to surrender so much at the bidding of his Lord. But William Forster knew Him in whom he had believed, and that, in the faithfulness of his love, He would keep all that he was about to commit unto Him. Few, besides his beloved wife, knew what had long been passing in his mind. From her he had not concealed "the king's secret," whilst yet a suitor for her hand. Nor, at the gentle announcement of such an impending sacrifice, did the Christian heroine shrink back from giving him both her hand and heart; and, bound as she now was to him by the tenderest ties of conjugal affection, neither the feelings of a wife, nor of a mother, were allowed to interpose between the servant and his Lord. The *love of Christ* constrained both husband and wife to live to Him rather than to

* "Memoir of Priscilla Gurney," by S. Corder, p. 126.

themselves, and they were strengthened to bow together to his will.

Among the many tokens of love and sympathy which flowed in upon them from their numerous relations and friends, on their being made acquainted with what was likely soon to be made more publicly known, it was a special comfort to both, to receive the following letter addressed to Anna Forster, by her brother, Thomas Fowell Buxton,* then at Earlham :

"My dear Sister,—Your letter has been much upon my mind, and has raised a variety of feelings. The first impression was one of much sorrow, that your plans and prospects of home happiness should be interrupted, and for so long a time ; but, I must confess, I have been speedily almost reconciled to it ; that is, I have brought it home to my own mind, and have considered whether it would not really be the greatest of blessings, if by any means my duty would call me to such a sacrifice, and the call were not to be disobeyed. After all, it is a noble thing—it is the noblest of all things, to be permitted to be a servant of the Infinite ruler of the world ; and how low and earthly is that wisdom which would prefer any delights before the delights of such self-dedication ! We know but few things for certain ; but this is one of them—a promise is given to him who leaves father or mother, or wife or children, for Christ's sake. How can I mourn, then, that William should accept the terms of such a promise ? I rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. I have always felt particularly interested with the vision of the man of Macedonia, calling Paul to come over and help them, comparing it with the Epistle to the Philippians. The discouragements at first were so great, and yet the Epistle describes such an abundant and happy produce. Who can tell how many may have eternal reason to rejoice at the obedience of the Apostle, and who can presume to limit the

* See "Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton," by his son Charles Buxton, B.A., chap. vi.

effect which Providence may please to produce by William's visit? We may differ on some points, but not on this—that his call is from above. I am persuaded it has been sought in the right spirit. I believe it is sent in mercy to others—in eminent mercy to him and you; and I am willing that you should undergo the pains of separation. But, my dear Anna, you must not imagine I am indifferent about this. Let me ask, have you determined to remain behind? I do not give an opinion upon the subject. All I wish to express is, that you must not stay from motives of economy. . . . Of course, we shall see you before his departure. I will hear of nothing else. With love to you both, and not without thankfulness that there is something of a missionary spirit among you,

"I am, your affectionate brother,

"T. F. BUXTON."

As the time drew near for bringing before the Friends of his Monthly Meeting the religious concern which pressed so heavily upon him, it was no wonder that William Forster, and the dear companion of his life, should be peculiarly open to a full view and a deep feeling of the greatness of the offering which they were about to lay upon the Lord's altar. It cannot be matter of surprise to find that they had to pass through "days of sore proving of faith," in the prospect before them; but, though sometimes "cast down," they were "not forsaken." The Lord of Hosts was with them; the God of Jacob was their refuge. A few days before the Monthly Meeting, William Forster writes

To J. AND S. GRUBB.

Bradpole, *First Month 25th, 1819.*

It has seemed good to the Lord in bestowing the best of his blessings upon man, to dispense them according to his

need. Thus in times of conflict and distress we often are made sensible of support and consolation wisely withheld from us in seasons of inward or outward prosperity. And in those times in which we are allowed to remain in undisturbed possession of that which is most dear in life, it is not often the case that we are such full partakers of that spiritual strength flowing from the boundless immensity of divine life and love, by which we become endued with godly courage, to acknowledge our discipleship to Christ under the most difficult circumstances. So that we need not wonder if the Apostles and most experienced and devoted servants of our Lord in every age should have gloried in infirmities, in necessities, in temptations, and conflicts, knowing that these were the opportunities in which they had most encouragement to expect that full display of the power of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead, and by which they had been quickened to newness of life. But whilst I can believe that to you, my dear friends, such dispensations have been greatly blessed to the furtherance of the work of redemption, even to your establishment in Christ, how different do I find it to bring them home to myself!

I believe you will tenderly feel for us when I say that the prospect which has long been before me of a visit to Friends in America will probably come before our next Monthly Meeting. None but He who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities can tell what we have at times to endure in these days of sore proving of faith. But thanks to the God of all consolation, that, knowing the great need of his help and support, we do not find Him afar off in this day of trial, but often animating us with fresh confidence in his love and mercy, and enabling us to hope in his providential care, his power and faithfulness. So that, when for a small moment we are raised by the quickening Word of life from the depth of our depression, we can, in some measure, bless his holy name that we are counted worthy thus to suffer for the sake of Christ and his gospel. Only consider the extent and awfulness of such an engagement, and think of the inexperience, the infirmities, and unworthiness of the poor instrument.

[After describing the delicate state of the health of his dear wife, he adds] But still the call is urgent to stand prepared to follow the Lord as he may open the way and put me forth; and I dare not for her sake, any more than my own, hesitate or consult with flesh and blood, lest I should be tempted to rebel against the Lord; and instead of promised blessings He should visit us with his judgments.

His most intimate friends who knew him best were most fully persuaded that there was nothing sombre or gloomy in the tone of his piety. But it was not his wont to *swim* lightly over the surface, he was accustomed to *wade* through whatever he undertook. The comprehensive grasp with which he laid hold of what was before him led him at once, not merely to the "upper," but much more to the "nether spring" of all his Christian activity; and it was thence that he brought up much that bore the impress of a mind deeply imbued with heavenly things. The characteristics which marked nearly all he said, or did, or wrote, during the whole course of his Christian walk —from the boy to the man, and the veteran soldier of Christ—were strongly shown forth in connection with the maturing, the development, and the practical carrying out of his religious concern to visit America, with all of sacrifice, of suffering, and of service which it involved.

About this time he writes

To Priscilla Gurney.

Within the last days there has been a decided amendment in the health of my dearest Anna. She accompanied me to our Monthly Meeting at Marnhull last week, where I was enabled to make public surrender of myself to the prospect of religious duty which has so long been before me. It was

a time of solemn feeling; and we were comforted together by the love and sympathy, and I trust the unity, of our friends. Since my return I have sunk again into the depths; but, through the kindness of our Heavenly Father, I have been so far inwardly sustained as to be kept from murmuring against the appointment of his wisdom, or, even in heart, turning aside from what I have reverently to believe is the way of his leading. Thou hast some understanding of what our union is to us. How very dependent we are, and how much it is an exercise of faith to look towards so long and distant a separation from my dearest treasures in life, especially under the very trying circumstances of my dear wife's weakly state of health. Our lovely boy is a great enjoyment to us: the interest we take in him and his lively playfulness almost imperceptibly draw us away from that which at other times would seem almost too heavy to be borne.

He set a high value upon the sympathy and unity of his friends, and he thus expresses his feelings in a letter

To Robert Jowitt.

Bradpole, *Third Month 18th, 1819.*

Thy kind and brotherly letter was very acceptable to us; the expression of thy sympathy and desires for our support was cordial and strengthening. I do not seem capable, under my present circumstances, of drawing much consolation from other sources than those with which I am immediately surrounded in my own dear family; yet I can sometimes take comfort in the love of my dear absent friends, and the near fellowship I enjoy, in some seasons of favour, with such as I believe do love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, is a brook by the way, by which I am cheered, refreshed and encouraged in the path which is opened before me.

I could tell thee much of my conflicts of spirit; and I could speak largely of that goodness and mercy which have been over us, and especially extended in the hour of need; truly we can

say nothing has been lacking of all that was needed for our help and support. But, alas! how much is still lacking in me of resignation, obedience, and perfect trust in God: in these respects I see myself in a deeply humiliating point of view. I want that filial confidence in which, with the fulness of love to our gracious Heavenly Father, I can accept the cup He is pleased to appoint me with unreasoning submission, without even inquiring why it is so very bitter, or desiring to put it away, or to have it held back longer than He sees meet. But may I not hope that these pleadings of nature and this desire to be spared a little longer to my dearest Anna and our precious child, are regarded with compassion by Him who knows whereof we are made, and how little we can bear without his holy help. *Little* do I say? I should have said *nothing;* for my present experience is most deeply instructing me in the truth of it, how entirely there is nothing that can be acceptably done or suffered without his immediate aid.

It must indeed be the work of his creation, as much so as the first dawning of that day in which we were begotten to a lively hope in the mercy of the Most High. I am often brought to feel it is He who must perform all things for me both inwardly and outwardly, in purifying the vessel, renewing the divine anointing, and making my way through the mountains which seem to magnify themselves in my view the more I look at them. It is not this sense of weakness and insufficiency that gives me pain, but it is that I am so little drawn in spirit to seek the Lord in prayer, to wait upon Him, and to thirst for those enjoyments of his presence which have been my chief delight. This does indeed make me seriously anxious about myself; and many are my fears that my progress in the divine life must have been obstructed, that I am not in this respect what I was a few years ago, when often, with cheerfulness and joy, I gave myself unto the Lord with desires that I might be counted worthy to spend the strength of my youth in his service.

Our dear boy is become very interesting to us, quite a companion, and very much our delight. I am thankful to say he is healthy; and comes forward much to our satisfaction.

How much do I desire that this, the chief of our earthly blessings, may be sanctified to us; that we may be enabled rightly to fulfil every duty towards him, and that we may be favoured to see him walk acceptably before the Lord. Already I feel what it is to have a child born into this world of trouble and temptation; sometimes in my too fearful imagination I anticipate his trials; and all the sympathies of my nature are awakened for him.

May I never forget that the same power which has wrought mightily for thousands already entered upon their heavenly inheritance, that in which I desire to trust for the work of my own redemption and preservation, will continue to remain when I may be taken away, as able to do all things for generations yet unborn, as for those who are now the objects of such grace.

To John Barclay.

Thy allusion to my prospects, inasmuch as it was expressive of thy sympathy, was comforting to me. I find (more so than on many former occasions) strength and support in the unity and fellow-feeling of my dear friends. The work before me is of awful magnitude; and I cannot say how bitter I feel that cup to be which must be drunk, in breaking away from the dearest treasures of my heart. But there is a power which can do all things for me. I trust it is by this that I have been enabled, in some favoured moments, to rise above the discouragements with which I have been almost overborne, and to trust in the Lord with resignation to his will. It is to this same Omnipotence that I must look in every hour of conflict; and in every call to duty, whether at home or abroad. O! then, for a humble, devoted, and patiently dependent state of mind; for hope and confidence in God. But alas! how prone are we to grow weary in watching, how soon do our eyes fail in looking upwards.

So long as thou art simply and patiently exercised in waiting for the teaching and leading of the Spirit of Christ, submitting thyself to his government, and faithfully confessing

thy discipleship in obedience to his will, let thy path be ever so strait and rugged,—let it be never so little understood by others,—if thou art thus exercised in spirit before the Lord, I cannot fear for thee; I believe and hope all will be well. Thou mayest have thy temptations—some obvious, others more specious; but He that has broken many of thy bonds, and evidently displayed the power of his grace in the work of thy redemption, will, I dare not doubt, continue to protect, support, and deliver.

Writing to another friend, he remarks—

I have informed Friends of our Monthly Meeting of an apprehension of being required to enter upon a visit to Friends in America; it has been long in prospect. But now the time seems to be drawing near for entering on the engagement, many are my trials of faith and my discouragements, and deep and heavy the conflict of natural affection and feeling.

I need not tell thee how hard it is to look towards so long and distant a separation from my beloved and most loving and helpful wife, and our sweet little boy. It is indeed a bitter cup; but I trust it is my desire to be kept from a repining or judging spirit. I wish to serve the Lord with cheerfulness and resignation; but, alas! the flesh is very weak: but may I never forget that, impossible as it seems to me, with God all things are possible.

I know how tenderly He cared for me, and how amply I was provided for many ways whilst travelling the wilds of Scotland! and if He be pleased to lead me into the wilderness of America, his power can preserve me there, and in his mercy and goodness He can spread a table for me, both spiritually and temporally, as far as He sees it to be good for me.

After having obtained the concurrence of his Quarterly Meeting, he again writes

To Robert Jowitt.

4th mo. 27th.—I was favoured to meet with all the sympathy and encouragement I could have hoped for from my dear friends at our late Quarterly Meeting; and at times I have hoped, so far as my great Master may see it to be good for me, that when I am cast upon the church more at large, I shall find the same strength to support in the unity of the brethren, as has been so much a comfort to me in the steps I have already taken. Or that if they do not see the way open for my enlargement, the burthen which has so long rested with me will be removed, and I shall be allowed to pursue the course of my social duties in quietness and peace; but this I feel forbidden to hope for. The dedication is not complete whilst there is even a desire cherished in the heart to be in anywise excused the sufferings and labours which our gracious Lord may be pleased to appoint. Feeling, as I still do, the call to be urgent to stand prepared to follow the leading of the Spirit, my own secret and fixed persuasion is that I shall sooner or later be led into a large field of exercise on that widely extended continent. As to the islands afar off, when I am from time to time given up to the prospect, I find myself accepted in the sacrifice, and resignation is made rest to my soul.

William Forster was freely liberated, and cordially encouraged, by the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders in London, to pursue, with the full unity of the church, the path of duty in the service of his Lord. Nearly eleven months, however, elapsed before he was prepared to take his departure for America. During this interval, and before the Yearly Meeting, he was engaged, sometimes in company with his dear wife, in a variety of labours of love among Friends and others in Devonshire, Lincolnshire, Cumberland, parts of Yorkshire, and the Northern and Midland Counties, as well as Somer-

setshire and Cornwall, and within the limits of his own Quarterly Meeting. These farewell visits to many of the churches and families of his own community, and the meetings he held for those of other denominations, were often occasions of much solemnity and blessing from the Lord.

William Forster was then in the prime of life—the vigour of his Christian manhood. But he was one of the last men from whom anything like an autobiography could be looked for. It was seldom without reluctance that he put his pen to paper; and the fragments of his written remains give but a feeble idea of what he was as a man, as a Christian, and especially as a minister of the gospel. Those only who had the privilege of hearing him, and of being brought to feel the authority under which he spoke, could form any just conception of the *power* of his ministry—its clearness, depth, and comprehensiveness; whilst, with a Pauline "*understanding*" and a Johannine "*spirit*," he stood and proclaimed, both to the sinner and to the believer, the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

The following letter was written about this time:—

To T. F. Buxton.

Bradpole, 1819.

My dear Fowell,—I should be very sorry that we should appear so much involved in our own concerns, deeply as they are interesting to ourselves, as to take no part with our friends in feeling for them under their present interesting circumstances, just entering upon such a new and very important career.*

* T. F. Buxton had just entered Parliament as member for Weymouth. See his Memoirs.

I can easily believe that the responsibility and importance of the engagement will be, and indeed are already, deeply felt; and that under the weight of them thou hast gone with humble, earnest prayer to the footstool of divine grace, fervently imploring the blessing of the Lord, the guidance and support of his wisdom, that thus blessed from above, as far as shall seem good in his sight, thou mayst be a blessing unto many. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing," is, we may believe, a promise not only to Abraham, but to Abraham's children to the end of time. How strong is our encouragement under these impressions to cherish a state of humble, patient, waiting prayer, willing to receive whatever may be granted of the counsels of the divine will, and trusting in God for his strength and protection.

To one to whom Christ and his gospel, his truth and righteousness, are made precious, as I believe they are to thee, under such circumstances there will be many an hour of need, many straits from which nothing but his power can deliver—many instances in which, humanly speaking, it will be hard to confess Him by decidedly pleading for his cause before men. But how much adapted to our frailty, and the danger of our individual path in life, is the word of our Lord, "That which is impossible with man is possible with God." If, then, we come to look up to God through Christ in prayer, and to rely upon him with humble, filial dependence, what cause for encouragement—how much to hope for—how little that we have need to fear!

In our letters the other day from Keswick, Anna Gurney entertained us with a sketch of your Parliamentary prospects. I cannot say but she gave us great pleasure in telling us that they could not get thee to declare thy party—that politics was not thy object. I can well believe she gave us a clear statement of the case; that thou art taking thy post, with a determination to devote thy talents to the cause of justice, mercy, and religion, in whatever course the call of duty may lead thee. How many and various will be thy objects, most of them of such a nature as will be deeply interesting to us. It will be well if we are not too anxious for our daily paper

(furnished us through thy kindness), looking for thy speeches, and anticipating the subjects which are likely to be most interesting to thee. Prisons will probably take the first place; it is become such a popular interest that thy coadjutors will be many. It is really wonderful, and at the same time most satisfactory, to see how people of every class and party have given themselves to the subject; and we may confidently hope for great things in that department of the work of reformation.

We do most ardently wish thee well on thy way in all endeavours to promote this object of domestic improvement; but we want also to engage thee as advocate for another most important and extensive interest, to which I do not doubt but thou hast already given much of thy attention—the state of Africa, and of the slave population in the West Indies. The latter is a philanthropic object, which of all others lies most near to my heart. How little do we know of the thousands of those professedly, and, alas! how partially, under the protection of British law;—it may not be too much to say, the most helpless, forlorn, and oppressed of the human species, at least within the limits of this government.

The attention and exertions of the wise and good have been directed, and, through the divine blessing, not without much success, towards staying the progress of evil, in the abolition of the slave-trade. But now that point is settled, and placed upon a firm footing, and every year strengthened by new regulations and prohibitions, it is certainly time to turn the attention of the British public, and more especially the British Senate, towards the situation of those now in actual slavery. We want to know the number of slaves and free blacks on every island. And it is not much to ask for a return of the slave and free population in every island for the last seven years, that their increase or decrease may be ascertained. And especially would it be worthy the attention of Parliament to inquire what provision is made for the aged, and the orphans of the free negroes; for if they

have no claim but upon the benevolence of the affluent, it is easy to imagine there can hardly be a more abject, destitute people; the condition of slaves must be preferable. I wonder whether it has ever occurred to those who know more of the state of the West Indies than I do, whether some regulation by law could not be established, that, on the sale of negroes, husbands and wives should not be separated.

He had his eye upon everything; little that was of importance escaped his attention. The social, political, moral, and religious welfare of his fellow-men everywhere lay very near to his heart. In all these respects it was a time of great unsettlement, especially in the North of England. The financial and commercial difficulties of the country had produced great distress among the labouring population; complaints of want of employment were very general, and great discontent prevailed in consequence. Under the influence of popular leaders large political meetings were held in several manufacturing neighbourhoods. It was thought by many that the subversion both of religion and of the constitution was the aim of some of the prominent malcontents. The severe measures to which the magistrates of Manchester had resorted to suppress one of these meetings, leading to the sad affair called the "Manchester Massacre," had produced a large amount of excitement and alarm among all classes of the nation. This will explain some of the allusions made by William Forster in the following characteristic letter:—

To Joseph John Gurney.

Bradpole, *Twelfth Month 7th, 1819.*

My dearest Joseph,—Thy letter, which arrived during my

visit in Somersetshire, was, as thine have ever been, truly acceptable to me, as a repeated assurance of thy much loved friendship. Ever since I received it, and indeed long before it came, I have wished to write to thee; but I am become so extremely discouraged as to my ability to write at all, either to my own satisfaction or, as I fear, to the satisfaction of my friends, that it will be well if I do not, through my own timidity and reluctance, lose the enjoyment I so much prize in free and intimate communication with those whose friendship and confidence are most valuable to me.

I was truly interested by thy history. I often thought of you and your large autumn party; but of none more than thee. I felt for thee in the peculiarity of thy path; but I was not uneasy. Though I saw it had its trials and, perhaps, thou wilt allow me to say, its dangers also, I did not fear for thee; I had hope and confidence in that power which is become thy stay and support. I fancy I could often have enjoyed such refined intellectual society, for which I feel an increasing rather than a decreasing relish. Fowell must have contributed much to your delight; to have him intimately and thoroughly open would be a high treat; there is such depth of mind and strength of clearness, that one can hardly fail to gather something from him whenever we meet with him. I wonder how Fowell thinks and feels about the present appearance of things in the North. I was not a little gratified to see him numbered with the minority upon an important political question, as I made myself sure that it must have been on principle, and that he would be aware that it would not be exactly in accordance with the views of his constituents. It was truly a noble act, and must do much towards establishing his independence.*

It seems long since I saw thee, but the remembrance of our last interview is pleasant, and very satisfactory. I am afraid I was not understood at Ackworth. I really had an agreeable impression respecting the attention that had been paid to Scripture instruction; but I had always been cautious

* See his Memoirs, chap. vi.

of saying much about it, for I really did not understand the method that had been pursued, nor had I, till then, any opportunity of seeing it in operation. As to the extent to which it has been carried, the thing is very much new among Friends; and I have sometimes had a little fear lest, in injudicious hands, it might have the tendency of drawing our young people from the root of religion in their own experience, to become satisfied with their acquaintance with the principles of Christian Truth, stored in the memory. This is one of my difficulties, and my *only* difficulty respecting it; but believing, as I do, that those who have been called into this line of instruction are alive to the danger, and watchful upon *every* hand; and trusting that, for every right engagement, the great Master will qualify and guard his servants, I have been much at rest upon the subject; and, did I see an opening for it, so far as I might be qualified, I shall be glad to be helpful in furthering the object in other parts; for though my own mind, as to the method and extent, was never fully concluded, I have for many years believed that it would be for the good of our Society to become more thoroughly acquainted with, and more deeply grounded in Scripture Truth.* As to myself, the Scriptures, and all that relates to the blessing of external revelation, was never a subject of deeper interest. It occupies much of my mind, perhaps I might say a large share of my daily attention. Sometimes I regret that I have not the means of deeply critical investigation; so much so that, did my circumstances admit of it, I should seriously set myself to study Greek. I find such a loss in not being able to consult the language of the text in its original, that I am obliged to take up with helps inferior to those which others enjoy. My itinerant life has never allowed me the opportunity for many of those pursuits to which I should have been glad to have been devoted; but I try to content myself with believing that if it really had been for my good, or would have materially conduced to my usefulness, I should have found an opening for such acquisitions. I could often be glad to have such a

* See "Memoirs of Joseph John Gurney, by J. B. Braithwaite," chap. ix.

friend as thyself at hand to help me over some of my difficulties, when I want to obtain a clearer understanding of the letter of the text. And in how many other things frequent enjoyment of thy company would be helpful and delightful to me, I will not attempt to say.

We do not yet relinquish the hope of seeing dear Priscilla in Dorsetshire. We are so deeply interested for her every way, that we could scarcely have a greater pleasure than for her to come and stay with us. I fear she will suffer by this very cold weather. It affects me very much. How I shall endure a winter in Canada I cannot say. I hardly think I shall be able to bear much exposure if the cold be more intense; but these contingencies of cold and heat, and many other outward trials, are light compared with the sufferings of separation from my dearest earthly happiness (not, I trust, entirely *earthly* either), in my beloved wife and our dear boy. We look steadily, in some degree of resignation, and not without hope in the mercy and power of the Lord, towards my departure in the spring. To be at the Yearly Meeting for New England in the Sixth Month, seems the first fixed point in my view, if I can consider anything as fixed. Those words of the Apostle are often present with me—"And now I go," "not knowing the things that shall befall me, &c." Indeed, I do not wish to *know;* if I may but find the Lord to be with me,—that I am under his guidance and protection, it will be enough. Conflict, temptation, and tribulation, I must expect to be my frequent portion. During my last visit in Somersetshire, my prospects of future service were almost continually before me; but such was the peace and joy, the comfort and hope which flowed in upon me, whilst dwelling on the truth, and power, and consolation of the Gospel; such the cheering and animating view that I enjoyed of the ministry of *reconciliation*, that I thought, might I be blessed with these views and feelings when more entirely separated for the service, how greatly would they mitigate my sufferings. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." If, in being made the favoured instruments of directing others unto Jesus, we ourselves are allowed access to the fountain of living waters,

the blessing is *in* the dedication; and how much more does the reward both here and hereafter compensate for all that we *can* surrender in giving ourselves to the Lord. In this I find strength for the present, and hope, and sometimes even confidence, both for myself and my dear wife, for the time to come. But it is not often that such a brook is open by the way. These are much days of sorrow and heaviness, and often of fearfulness and dismay; yet I am outwardly cheerful and happy, and have much enjoyment in the blessings of my sweet and peaceful home. My dearest Anna, except a cold, is uncommonly strong, and capable of more exertion than at any time since we married; our dear child, flourishing, engaging and companionable. We have not had much settled quiet at Bradpole since our return. My two youngest sisters are pleasantly with us; and my eldest sister, after a visit of a few days, left us this morning. And, besides my visit into Somersetshire, we have been together to our Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, which took us from home nearly a week.

I have heard but little remark on thy attending the Norwich Election Meeting. When thou hast time, do tell me more about it, and what thou thinks of the aspect of the times. It is but seldom I venture to express a sentiment upon the subject, but I think a great deal. I am not very much alarmed as to the issue. As a nation we may be chastened, that the fruit-bearing branches may be pruned; but I do not think that we shall very greatly fall. I am fully of the mind that it is best for Friends at present to be perfectly quiet, both within and without,—I mean as to issuing advice to the Society, or coming forward with any address to the Throne. I cannot see that the Society has much else to do than practically to illustrate the language of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world." In this I believe that Friends will find their preservation, and their proper line of civil and religious usefulness. Mind, I do not mean these remarks as any lecture to thee—very far from it. I give thee full credit for having acted upon conviction, and can easily believe that in such a case *thou* might have been in thy right line of duty.

I wish to hope that the increase of infidelity and irreligion

is exaggerated; but the extent to which I cannot doubt they do prevail makes me very sorrowful. May it please the Lord in his wisdom and mercy to show his believing and dependent servants the path they should individually take to stem the torrent, and to stay its desolating and corrupting influence. I fully trust that good will eventually result, that many will be led to look more deeply into the evidences of Christianity, and become established in the faith,—that, in the end, the impiety and unbelief, as well as the "wrath of man," may be made to praise the Lord.

When may we hope to see thy book before the public. I do think it would come forth in its season this winter. I fear that the Unitarians are on the increase in the North; or rather that Socinianism is secretly undermining the faith of many who do not join their body. After thou hast sent forth thy present work, thou must write something clear and convincing for the lower classes.

Mention us most affectionately to all your party. I am, as ever, in warmest love,

hy faithful friend,

WILLIAM FORSTER.

To JOSIAH FORSTER.

Bradpole, *Twelfth Month 25th, 1819.*

The relief and comfort to us is very great to believe that our poor neighbours are not in great suffering. I fear there is much real distress in many parts of the manufacturing districts; this occasions us many a pang. We are not indifferent to the perturbed state of the people; and, though we do not get the sight of a paper so frequently as last winter, we manage to find out what is going forwards.

I am not very much alarmed for the peace of the country; though I confess the countenance given by some of the great men in Yorkshire to these assumed reformists did occasion me a few misgivings. Upon the whole, though I was at first a little affronted at the infringement of Government upon the rights of the people and the liberty of the press, especially as

I thought it a little cramping to religious freedom, the more I understand the new measures, if I understand them at all, the more I think them marked with as much moderation as we might expect, considering the degree to which people in power profess to see the nation in danger.

The horrid avowal of infidelity by Carlile and his adherents (I believe unprecedented in this nation) did make me almost ill; but I took comfort in the belief that it was not a very wide-spread evil. I see religious people of different persuasions are all on the alert, and perhaps quite enough inclined to vie with each other as to who shall make the fullest and most orthodox confession of faith. I do not doubt but some good things will come forth; and I fancy there is something clever in a piece written by Hartwell Horne, already in its fifth edition. I have not yet got a copy. It may be well for our Tract Committee to look to what part Friends have to take in the contest; to act upon conviction and not by imitation.

I was pleasantly impressed with a short memoir of the famous William Tyndale, in the "Baptist Magazine," I think for the Tenth Month; and thought that a useful, informing tract might be made from it, in which we might hint at the blessing of having the Scriptures in our tongue; and introduce some allusion to the times in which he lived, and the labours and sufferings of the Reformers, which might be new to many and hurtful to none. There is a good tract published by the Religious Tract Society, called the History of the English Bible, which I think very well done. I am not acquainted with the piece of Watts's which thou hast mentioned; his writings are not the first which I should have thought would have been resorted to by Friends. I am not much read in them; but the working of a fervid imagination, and his frequent flights of fancy, so obviously apparent in some of his essays, would not seem to accord very much with the sober views and feelings of Friends; but I have been instructed and enlivened by reading his works.

I don't know that for a long time anything has struck me so forcibly as the late intelligence from the South Seas,

particularly Marsden's letter; and one or two others in the last number of the "Evangelical Magazine." There is the report, in their periodical publication, of upwards of sixty places appropriated to divine worship in those islands. Even after a very large deduction, it must be considered as one of the most extraordinary events in the history of the Christian church in modern times,—a nation fifty years ago unknown to Europeans, idolaters, sunk to the lowest state of degradation, now brought at least to the profession of faith in Christ, grounded in the rudiments of knowledge, and the way prepared for their receiving in their own language the Holy Scriptures.

In reference to the forming of a Bible Association in Dorsetshire, he says:—

The universal dispersing of the Holy Scriptures is an object that must be dear to the heart of every one who, through divine mercy, is in any degree prepared to appreciate the consolations of true religion, so that we cannot but earnestly desire that no labour may be spared, no exertion wanting, until every cottage is furnished with the sacred volume; and that no want of effort on our part may prevent the means being supplied, from year to year, to those who are spending their days in foreign lands, diligently employed in translating these invaluable records into so many different languages. If this great and most desirable object be accomplished, the inhabitants of the country as well as the city must take their part in the work; the villages and towns are called upon to form their branch societies and Bible associations, and thus unite in harmonious co-operation towards the universal diffusion of scriptural light and knowledge, a work in which we have encouragement to hope for the divine blessing, inasmuch as we cannot doubt but it has its origin in the counsels of divine love.

In allusion to the experience of the Lord's servants, he remarks:—

They feel their unworthiness and dependence; then they cry in humble filial prayer; and again He listens to the breathing of their suppliant spirits. Sometimes at an unexpected moment He renews the evidence of his love. He gives them to rejoice in tokens of his fatherly adoption. He brightens their prospects and enlarges their hearts. And who, thus quickened and comforted and brought into the love and liberty of the Gospel of Christ, can refuse obedience to his will, or to serve Him in all singleness, simplicity and resignation? O! the blessedness of these depths of conflict, these plunges of spirit! How greatly blessed if they may but issue in such renewed confirmation and encouragement, and prepare us with greater purity of heart to worship God; and by the help of his Spirit to make acceptable acknowledgment of our discipleship.

As I grow older I take a much more cheering and comforting view of the religion of the Gospel. I see the good, the necessity, and the value of the cross,—of humiliations and the prostration of self. But my sense of the hope, the joy, the victory, the power and glory, which are the blessed portions of the devoted believer, the permanency of the covenant, and the stability of our foundation in Christ, so far outweigh all these considerations, in the balance, that at times it seems like laying hold of eternal life. O! that in the mercies of redeeming love, after all my little measure of suffering shall be filled up, I may be permitted to realize that of which I have seen enough to be sure, that even with the fulness of faith we have but an imperfect conception of it. Those passages in the Gospel by which life and immortality are brought to light are most sweet and precious to me. I cannot but wish I might more constantly feel them abiding in me.

To Priscilla Gurney.

O! how much is it my prayer—the prayer of faith, that the Lord whose he is, and whom he is given up to serve, may prove Himself all in all to our beloved friend,—his strength

and shield, his stay, and the anchor of his soul. We must expect that he will have his baptisms and seasons of suffering, and descendings into death. These I anticipate for him and for thee, and for myself, and dearest Anna too. Nor can I ask that we should be excused from the pains of this conflict. Because I believe it is through these means that the Lord will work to the exaltation of his great name, both in and through those whom He may count worthy of a part in this ministry.

How does He empty us that we may see our poverty and feel our helplessness; and thus be prepared to render Him the praise of his own strength. And if at times He seem to withdraw his hand, and suffer us to sink into that which remains of our corruption, even into such depths that He in whom we have had hope of reconciliation and redemption be veiled from our view, may we not reverently believe that, in these humiliating and distressful baptisms, it is not only the purpose of his wisdom and mercy that we may know for ourselves what we are without Christ as our rock and refuge; but that we may feel more sensibly for those to whom He may count us worthy of bearing the tidings of his love and power?

But I see more and more that it is not for his children to determine one for the other, any more than to choose for themselves. And perhaps it is the lesson of the present day for myself, yet more fully to learn that to his sovereign will and wisdom, it is both the safety and the peace of his children with unreserved submission cheerfully to bow.

He may appoint a different path to others than that in which He has seen meet to lead me, and He may employ different outward means to accomplish in them the same end; so that the utmost we can desire one for the other is to be kept under the government of his Spirit; and to be found waiting on the teaching of the Anointing.

O! were this the case more generally with us, what a living people we should be. What brightness, and power, and glory, would appear among us. To come to this, and to be kept in

it, is all my hope for a revival in our Society. I believe that the Lord has not yet ceased to show forth his power among us,—that it will yet appear gloriously, both breaking down and building up, weakening the strong, and strengthening the weak,—that He will choose and sanctify vessels to his service, and eminently fill them with life and love, that He will grant bright and animating views of the nature and extent of his salvation to those whom He shall thus be pleased to set apart more peculiarly for Himself.

The parting hour was looming up. At this juncture, William and Anna Forster received a visit from their brother Thomas Fowell Buxton. It will not be thought strange, that, in the intimate and thoroughly open converse which they enjoyed together, the latter should meet with much that prompted his remarks in writing home

To Mrs. Buxton.

Bradpole, *March 11th, 1820.*

I came here to-day, and have much enjoyed seeing them. William, however, is grave and low. Now, I think he has no right to be low; having made up his mind to change perishable for imperishable, and imperfect for perfect, he ought only to rejoice that he has been wise enough to make so good a bargain. However, the sacrifice is a noble one, for I think I never saw two people more possessing their hearts' content.*

We augur well of the servant of Christ when we see him brought "low," before he is "girded with strength" and "with gladness." When Luther had to appear before the Diet of Worms, he was, for a while, in deep exercise of mind. His enemies

* See "Memoirs of Sir T. F. Buxton," chap. vii.

seemed to multiply before him, and his imagination was overcome by the aspect of his dangers. God's face seemed to be veiled; and his faith, for a moment, forsook him.* But he was brought to feel his own weakness, only that he might be made strong in the Lord for the work to which he was called. There was a wide difference between the character of the intrepid, lion-hearted German Reformer, and that of the meek and gentle, yet not less unflinching and martyr-like, spirit of William Forster. In both instances, the mode of preparation for the service of Christ was not dissimilar. "Out of weakness" they "were made strong," and "waxed valiant in fight."

The next day T. F. Buxton says in a letter

To J. J. Gurney.

"Bradpole, *March 12th, 1820.*

I have here a full opportunity of learning a lesson of humility. It is very well to do good and to serve one's country, while at the same moment we are feeding our ambition and gratifying our pride; but what are the sacrifices I make? I may call them sacrifices, but their true name is—the pleasures I enjoy. Here, however, the pleasures and the sacrifices are totally at variance. How truly and exactly do the words, "They left all and followed Him," convey my view of William's two years' absence from a home, a wife, a boy (not to mention the dear horse, and ducks, and flowers), the very darlings of his heart, all his wishes and desires centering in this spot! Well, I cannot pity him. I am more inclined to envy one who is wise enough to make a bargain so incontestably good. I went to meeting with him twice

* D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation."

to-day. His morning sermon on "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths," was one of the very best I ever heard. But the text is one particularly interesting to me.*

* "Memoirs of Sir T. F. Buxton," chap. vii.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

DEPARTURE.

William Forster embarked for America on the 15th of Fourth Month, 1820, in the ship *Emulation*, Captain Paddock, bound from Bristol to New York. It was an event of no common interest to many. The devoted servant speaks of it himself in a letter written in the Bristol Channel

To Robert Jowitt.

To the eastward of Lundy Island,
Fourth Month, 18th, 1820.

On the Fourth-day previous to my leaving home I met with a serious accident [a severe hurt on the knee, caused by an attack from a furious bull on his return from Bridport], which has occasioned me much pain, and by which I have been much disabled from walking. I was obliged to take to my bed as soon as I got home, and scarcely left it till I was helped into the carriage that was prepared to bring me to Bristol. The journey was accomplished with as little suffering as I might have expected, though at times I was in much pain.

My dearest Anna and my father and mother came with me in the coach. We were part of two days on the road, and reached our very kind friend John Waring's on the evening of the 10th. Finding that the vessel would not be likely to sail so soon as we expected, I had the assistance of a very skilful surgeon, whose report, as he considered that the joint was not materially injured, was a great comfort both to myself and my dear wife.

At first we were much cast down by this affliction; but, being brought to believe that it came upon us by the permission of Heavenly Wisdom, I trust we were allowed to reap much of the good it was designed to produce. It was instrumental in a very great measure to break me off from my home comforts; and as I was entirely laid by, and unequal to attend to much of an outward nature, my mind, through divine mercy and help, was brought into a state of resignation and devotedness to the will and service of our gracious Lord, such as I could hardly have believed it possible for me to experience. Under these feelings of quiet, unmurmuring submission, I parted from my dear and tender child, and left my dearest earthly home.

At Bristol I was favoured with the sympathy and encouragement of many dear friends, which was much to my help and comfort. My two brothers came to me. Stephen Grellet and Luke Howard arrived the day before, and our beloved friend J. J. Gurney arrived on the second day.

Our separation took place on Seventh-day morning. I will not attempt to tell thee what it was to us—how deeply affecting to our nature—how much it seemed as if we should be utterly overwhelmed in the conflict. But our gracious Lord mercifully regarded us in the hour of sorest extremity, raising within us humble confidence in his support and protection, and enabling us to commit each other to his care and disposal.

I stood upon deck watching the dearest object of my affections till I could see her no longer. I was at that moment preserved from a wish to return to her; and since our separation, much as I feel my many and great privations, I am,—and I hope I may be allowed to believe it is of the Lord and not of myself,—so far kept in contentment and acquiescence with what I trust is his blessed will respecting me, that I have no desire to be in any other place, nor under any other circumstances, than those which he is pleased to appoint.

"It was a memorable occasion," writes Joseph John

Gurney; "both William and his dear wife were marvellously upheld. Just before the vessel left the basin we were all collected in the cabin, in retirement before the Lord—about twenty Friends.* Dear Anna returned thanks for the prospect which was given to her of William's safe voyage. I felt strengthened to commend them and their child to Him who can alone preserve; immediately after which the vessel sailed, and went off, contrary to the usual custom, in almost perfect silence. The last look of William's, which I caught, was a look of peace and joy; and some of us, after we had parted, traced the course of the vessel down the river. It was a bright sunshiny morning. The vessel was very handsome; and I shall not soon forget the beautiful scene which she presented, as she glided between the rocks of the Avon.

"Anna, her mother and brother Robert, and myself, went to Priscilla H. Gurney's, at Bath, in the afternoon, at whose peaceful cottage we were most affectionately welcomed. We closed the day together in solemn prayer."

William Forster, meanwhile, was slowly sailing down the Bristol Channel. Thence he writes—

To Joseph John Gurney.

Six miles east of Lundy Island,
Fourth Month 19th, 1820.

Thy friendship, love, and sympathy, so eminently manifest during thy visit at Bristol, are very frequently present in my recollection, much to my comfort and encouragement. My heart is so much dwelling with thee in near, affectionate love, and most intimate unity, that I scarcely seem to have parted

* Stephen Grellet, who had lately returned from the Continent, remarks, in his Journal:—"I met at Bristol with my beloved friend William Forster, who had come there to embark for the United States, on a religious visit. I felt very tenderly for him and his beloved wife at parting from one another under such circumstances. They both were greatly supported, leaning on the Lord's arm, resigned to his Divine will, to be separated for the service of the Gospel."—Memoirs, vol. ii., chap. 43.

from thee; and I hardly know how to admit the thought that it may be years before we meet again. But that we shall meet again in the enjoyment of the peace and love and fellowship of the Gospel of Christ is the hope with which I feel sustained at this moment, and in which I am allowed to take some real consolation.

My heart is very much prone to sink at the prospect opening before me; and I feel much of the awfulness of the service to which I have been strengthened to devote myself; but being enabled in some moments of divine favour to believe that it is a path into which I am led by the Spirit of Christ, I am endued with some small measure of capacity to put my trust in the Lord for the days to come. May the Lord still incline thee in his love and power to think of and to plead for thy poor brother, both in his long pilgrimage through these deep waters, and in all the tribulations, temptations, and perils which may be allotted him in filling up his appointed measure of suffering for the sake of Christ upon those distant shores.

I have many alleviations under my present privations—the accommodation exceeds my expectation—the steward is as kind and attentive to me as if I had brought a servant for my own exclusive benefit; and Ebenezer* is my cheerful, kind and helpful friend. This is the fifth day since we left Bristol, and we are only now about to leave the Channel. Our detention has been an exercise of patience; but through divine help I have been mostly kept in quiet contentment, not at all doubting but that it is all best for me; and that, if it be the Lord's good pleasure to give me a safe landing on the other side, that it will be in the day of his own appointed time.

The passage occupied a little more than five weeks. Though not without perils of various kinds—from storms, and fogs, and icebergs, &c.—the incidents of

* One of his fellow passengers, with whom he had some previous acquaintance.

the voyage presented nothing of an unusual character. Fairly out at sea, the depressing effect of a frequent recurrence of sea-sickness, and the injury on his knee, kept William Forster's health quite below par; and, whether on deck or in his berth, quiet and rest were found to be essential. The captain was considerate and attentive; the passengers were interesting and kind; but it was seldom that W. F. was able to mingle much with them, or to avail himself of opportunities for collective religious service among them. The following remarks are extracted from his letters :—

1820. *4th mo. 28th.*—Lat. 46° 6′, Long. 30° 35′. For a few days my sickness was very distressing. I either lay in my berth, unable to raise my head from the pillow, or very much in the same situation upon deck. The wind has been mostly in our favour, almost from the time of our leaving Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel; but the rolling of the vessel for the last two or three days, occasioned by a heavy swell, has been as much as I and our other invalids could very well bear. Yesterday the wind abated, and sunk nearly to a calm; this has given me some opportunity to recruit. How strange I felt it, to be nearly stationary upon the ocean one thousand miles from home; but I was cheerfully content, not doubting we should have another breeze before long. About twelve o'clock it began to freshen, and we are now going about five knots an hour. The ship is more steady, and I have been lying very quietly under the canopy of Captain Paddock's umbrella—a very agreeable shelter from the scorching rays of the sun—listening to Ebenezer reading the life of Bishop Wilson. He has just been reading to me in the Psalms as I lay in bed, which has been a comfort to me. I think the weather wears rather a threatening aspect. I have been seeking to be quiet and staid in spirit; and I think I have been favoured to feel an interest in those precious words,

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." I trust I do sometimes feel the Lord to be with me on these the days of my pilgrimage through many deep waters; for so I find it, both literally and spiritually—that He does graciously compassionate my low estate, and sometimes in tenderest mercy I think I can feel his hand held out for my strength and encouragement.

30th.—We have had two very trying nights, especially the last. On Sixth-day night, the wind was very high; and to me it was awful. Yesterday I was for a while on deck; it was a time of conflict, and often of distress, such as I had not known before since I left. I went down to my berth early, and was very poorly. The wind increased as night came on, and about two o'clock it blew a heavy gale, quite a storm; all hands were on deck, and many of the passengers got up. About four they put up the dead lights. The whole wore a very fearful appearance. In the time of greatest trial (Oh, may I remember it for my future encouragement!) our Heavenly Father was very gracious to me. I was much in prayer most of the night, and did not immediately feel that quiet and support I so earnestly sought after; but as morning approached, and the storm increased, I was brought into a state of humble resignation, and my hope revived. I thought it was the word of the Lord immediately given me for my hope and comfort: "Thou art safe, my child, in the bosom of my love and protection." I had renewedly to believe that it was in desire to serve Him that I had ventured forth—that I had not come in a presumptuous spirit, but in obedience to his will; and may I not say, in the fear of the Lord, that this persuasion helped to stay me. Oh! it was a time of unutterably deep searching of heart, and also of the renewal of covenant. Never was I brought more to the feeling of those words of Addison, "My life, if thou preserve my life, thy sacrifice shall be." May I so live through each succeeding day that may yet be allotted me in watchful walking before the Lord, that all that He may be pleased to call for may be given up and kept devoted unto Him, not only in regard to that into which in his great mercy He may

be pleased to lead me on the widely-extended continent to which we are bending our course, but throughout the whole residue of my days. The storm abated about break of day; but there is still a very heavy swell, and the appearance of the horizon indicates more wind. My nature in its infirmity shrinks from further conflict. Oh, may the Lord be near to pity and help!

5th mo. 4th.—We have had several very trying days; often a very strong head wind, and at times a tremendously heavy sea; so that we have made but very little progress during the last week.

On Second-day the motion of the ship was so great that I did not leave my berth. It was a day not to be forgotten; such awful deep and agonizing conflict as I had seldom, if ever, known. How much did I seem to myself to be treading the valley of the shadow of death! How near did I seem to be approaching the confines of the invisible world, and yet what clinging to life! Surely the arm of Everlasting Power was underneath, or I should have utterly sunk. I found no rest to my poor tribulated and tossed mind till I could make a full surrender of all into the hands of God, my life and all most dear to me in this state of being. At length, I trust it was attained under the influence of his love; He wrought it in me, and I could approach his presence. I believe this dispensation was brought upon me in the wisdom and mercy of the Lord, perhaps that it might work in me a more entire separation and devotedness of heart to Him and the work He may be pleased to appoint me, and that I might be led to look with increased purpose of heart beyond the things which are seen, and dwell more constantly on things that are eternal. Oh! what deep humiliating views I have had of myself, my deficiencies, my transgressions, my unworthiness, yea, my vileness; and how earnestly have I sought to know whether, indeed, I have an interest in Christ—whether I do really belong to Him. In the greatness of heavenly condescension and compassion, I thought I could discover something wherein I could rest my tribulated and conflicted spirit; for it was those who believed in Him and were accepted

by Him to whom He granted the teaching and leading of his Spirit; and believing that I had known this, and that it was in obedience to his will thus manifested to me that I had thus ventured forth, I was brought to some degree of calmness and quietness of mind.

When I came down on Fourth-day evening, the captain thought the weather more promising, and that the sea was falling fast; but it soon changed; the wind became more variable, and the sea as rough, and indeed more agitated, than before. Towards evening it was, to all our company, truly alarming; the ship rolled to a dreadful degree, and the waves beat upon us in all directions; it was like being tossed in a tremendous vortex. About ten o'clock our situation was awful; the shocks were with such violence that it seemed as if the vessel would be broken to pieces. It was a time of much solemnity. I found some relief from my fears and conflicts in pouring forth my soul in vocal prayer. Our path at that moment seemed to lay by the very brink of the pit; but though I thought the ship could scarcely survive the conflict much longer, I was enabled to maintain a sweet persuasion that our lives would be spared, to which I was assisted by the feeling expressed by some of our dear friends, who seemed to have such clear and satisfying assurance of my preservation. The captain came down about twelve o'clock, and brought a much more cheering account; but acknowledged that he had never known such a time before. The waves were running with such fury in all directions, that it was difficult to manage the ship. The quietness which now prevails both within and without is grateful beyond description; but I have learnt to rejoice with trembling, I trust not without thankfulness. There is another sort of training in which I feel anxious to become more proficient—in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. This is hard to attain, but I trust that, at times, I do sincerely aspire after it.

Seventh-day.—I woke early, and lay for some time in a thoughtful, serious state of mind; and, seeking to the Lord, I was blessed with a renewal of confidence and hope. It was given me to believe that whatever may be the trials and

perils of our voyage, it will end well at last. This has been a remarkably fine, pleasant day, much enjoyed by our company, but by none more than myself. Such a contrast to what we have lately experienced! The sea has been comparatively smooth, and the sky at times almost without a cloud.

The sun has just dipped below the horizon, remarkably clear and bright, very promising, as our seamen think, for a fine night: it was truly a glorious sight. Oh! that at the end of days, in the great mercy of our holy Redeemer, it may be thus with us, that our sun may go down in brightness; and that in the evening of life we may be blessed with a calm and peaceful hope of a glorious immortality.

Second-day noon.—I came upon deck to breakfast, and have been sitting up almost ever since, I trust really thankful for my improved state of health, and increased capability of enjoyment. Yesterday, I had a long, pleasant, peaceful, and I trust not an unprofitable day; and, joined by the captain, I read two or three psalms. I was desirous that I might be able to spend the day profitably; that my example might comport with the solemn nature of the object I have before me. As I sought unto the Lord, in the riches of condescending mercy, He permitted me to draw nigh unto Him; and by the sensible shedding abroad of heavenly love my heart was made tender, and I remembered many of my dear friends in England and Ireland, especially those who had been my companions and helpers in the work of the Lord, some who have already entered into rest, and others still remaining alive in his love, and devoted to his blessed cause. In these moments of divine favour, I had comfort in them with desires that I might forget all that I have known of the infirmities of any. I remember dear Mary Collins told me in regard to one of the visits in London, in which she accompanied Tabitha Middleton, whose memory is very precious to me, that her concern was to *encourage the good in all*: this we must believe to be peculiarly the object of that ministry, which originates in the love of Him, who through the grace of God has tasted death for every man. In that which I feel of this love, by which I am now borne upon the great deep towards a distant shore, it is much my earnest desire that, by abiding under its

helpful and preserving influence, I may, by the exercise of my spirit, if not by more public service, be made, as far as it may please the Lord, instrumental to the strengthening of his work in the hearts of his believing children, and enjoy as much of the unity of the brotherhood as He sees to be good for me. If I may but be kept in humility,—watchful and tender in spirit, and near to Him who alone can direct my steps in safety, it is all I ask, and this I fully hope will not be denied, if sought with sincerity and in patience. Not seeing any probability of our company being collected to advantage in the forenoon, I endeavoured to keep my mind retired. Finding that our party were willing to come together in the evening, we had tea early. I went down, took my seat, and read the first Epistle of Peter and 107th Psalm. I thought there was a serious feeling amongst us, and afterwards believed I should not be clear without expressing a little of what was on my mind, which I trust might be for the encouragement of some.

I had a good night's rest. I was scarcely awake when tidings came down that ice was in sight, which we had had much reason to expect, from the coldness of the temperature, for several days. I think it impossible to give an adequate idea of the beauty and grandeur of the spectacle; one of these bergs was at some distance behind us, the other about two or three miles right a-head; upon this the sun was shining bright and clear; it had the appearance of a small mountain entirely covered with fresh drifted snow, sailing gently, and sparkling with beautiful lustre. We have had seven or eight of these bergs in sight during the forenoon; and, there being none to be seen to the eastward, the captain flatters himself that we may not fall in with any more. We are remarkably favoured in having such fine, clear weather; it being generally thick and foggy in these longitudes. In beholding the stupendous works of the hand of Almighty God, I was led, in humble reverence of His wisdom and power, to meditate upon the economy of His providence. How wonderfully all is made to work together for the good of the whole; nothing is created in vain. Notwithstanding all the changes that appear in nature, nothing is lost.

I am improved in health within the last two days; my strength is returning, and my appetite now as good as I could wish. Yesterday and to-day our prospect has been cheered by an additional number and variety of birds. It is amusing to me to watch them flying, and swimming, and diving. Within the last hour, whilst I have been writing, I was called off to look at some of the grampus whale, sporting themselves within a few yards of the ship. Truly we must acknowledge that on the sea the works and wonders of the Lord are much to be seen! May I never be an indifferent beholder, but in all that I see in every place give Him the glory that is due to his most excellent name.

Second-day.—Reading in the Revelation this morning, I felt encouragement in observing the value that is set upon the prayers of the saints—"As the odour of precious incense treasured up in golden vials." How great, then, is the blessedness of a life of prayer, and with what humble, filial submission, with how much more than submission, with what thankfulness ought we to accept such of the dealings of Heavenly Wisdom as tend to quicken us in our desire and endeavour to seek the Lord and wait upon Him! This afternoon the air has been very keen: with my thick great-coat and another underneath, I find it hard to keep myself even tolerably warm. We have seen one large iceberg at a distance this afternoon, and some smaller pieces were floating nearer to us. A thick fog is just come on. I cannot but feel the seriousness of our situation; but the captain seems well aware of the necessity of keeping a strict look-out for ice, and we must trust that the blessing of heavenly protection will be added to his care and vigilance. I went and sat a while with the men at the forecastle; it was a pleasant change to me to watch them at their different employments. I have been brought into much increase of feeling during our voyage with the disadvantages and temptations incident to a seafaring life, and very much so in hearing one of the men relate some of the trials which he had endured during a voyage to the South Seas for the purpose of catching seals. They were nearly three years without fresh provision, in consequence of which

some of the men were brought into much suffering. Perhaps I should not prove more virtuous under the trial than others have been; but at present I do not know what prospect of gain would prevail with me to accede to the voluntary exposure of my fellow-creatures to such suffering.

I was up part of Third-day; the evening was fine, but just at sunset there came on a heavy swell, with a head-wind. We were much tossed through the night, but I had some sweet feeling of rest and comfort. I was permitted to lean on the Saviour's bosom, and He gave me much quietness and hope in the midst of the roaring of the elements. Towards morning, the sea was more calm; and to-day the ship has laid to her course, and we have made some way. Yesterday and last night were extremely cold; it was difficult for any of us to keep tolerably warm. In my present weak and sickly state, a much longer detention at sea would be very trying; but I find it much more to my strength and comfort to look back on the many mercies which have hitherto attended us, than to look forward with discouraging apprehensions to the trials which may yet be in reserve.

Many of our company entertain the hope that our voyage may be accomplished by the latter part of next week. I am afraid to set my heart upon so cheering a prospect; but I trust it is not displeasing to the Lord that we should hope, and even ask for favours which He alone can give, so long as our prayer is in submission to his will, and we seek to be guarded against a spirit of presumptuous confidence.

20th. Seventh-day.—Within the last few days, the weather has been very unfavourable, and I have been much confined to my bed, often low, and sometimes tempted to yield to undue discouragement; but some few gleams of heavenly comfort have at times cheered my spirit; and my faith and hope have been revived in the goodness and tender mercies of our Almighty Heavenly Father, and, trusting in his divine protection, I have looked forward to the safe termination of our voyage. I will not say that it is an impossibility for us to be in time for their afternoon meeting at New York

to-morrow; but, however pleasant it would be, I am not over anxious about it, if I may but be favoured with quietness and retiredness of mind. I do not know but it will be as much for my strength and comfort, to spend one more First-day on board, rather than to go all at once upon such a large body of Friends.

To be safely landed and rightly initiated into the duties of the important engagement for which I have left all most dear to me in life, would be truly grateful, but I cannot tell how deeply I feel the weight, the seriousness, the responsibility, and the temptations which I know I must expect to meet with in the path of dedication in which I believe myself called to follow the Lord. May I never forget that his grace is sufficient, and never cease to look unto Him, and humbly and reverently wait for those supplies which He alone can afford.

21st.—What pleasure would it give my friends, if they could now see us rapidly sailing up New York harbour, a lovely day, and a fine breeze in our favour. The pilot has just this minute given us the expectation of our being at the city before two o'clock, so that I must take courage, and go and make exhibition of myself to Friends at their afternoon meeting.

I feel not a little at the extensive prospect before me; but, through the mercy and help of our gracious Redeemer, my mind is preserved in resignation to the Divine will, and clothed with that love which dwelt so abundantly in the Apostle, that he was willing to become all things to all men, if he might gain some; and if, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I may be made in any measure instrumental to the strength and comfort of any of his believing and contrite followers, I repent not of all the sufferings I have passed through, the extent of which is known to Omniscience alone.

We are now passing the Narrows, with batteries on each side; the shores beautifully studded with small country houses, and well wooded, and the country on every hand in the full glory of its greenness; and just this minute we have

opened on the city on our left, and probably shall not be long before we reach the quay. My heart is very full and overflowing. Oh, how can I ever give sufficient proof of my gratitude to Him whose mercies have been so often and abundantly renewed during the trials of my watery pilgrimage; the hope that has been raised within me is full of comfort.

The next day William Forster adds :—

New York, 5th mo. 22nd.—Through the blessing of the Almighty—O! that I may never speak of his goodness without feeling to what great degree I owe to Him all that I am, and all that I enjoy—we were favoured to make a safe entrance into New York harbour yesterday morning, and reached the city about two o'clock in the afternoon. I came on shore in time to attend the meeting in Pearl-street at four o'clock; and after meeting was taken home by Thomas Eddy, who has claimed me for his guest; and I feel myself as much at home under his roof as I can expect to be anywhere.

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

ENTRANCE UPON HIS MINISTRY IN AMERICA.

THERE was something very touching in "the *debut* of William Forster, in a land where he was to labour long—a land which he was to visit and revisit, in astonishing comprehensiveness of Gospel love, and where, after the lapse of many years, he was to close his earthly probation, under such circumstances that one generation must of necessity tell his name unto another, and his unpretending tomb shall be distinct in its record and its lesson

> "'While kings, in dusky darkness hid,
> Have left a *nameless* pyramid.'"*

From the vessel, as has been seen, without calling at any Friend's house, and alone, William Forster found his way to the meeting in Pearl-street, New York. He arrived there a little before the time, and quietly took his seat in the minister's gallery, unknown to all who assembled. "His appearance was unassuming and very simple. His travelling dress, somewhat peculiar, was unexceptionably plain. There he sat, immersed in meditation, as one more conscious of the Unseen Presence than of the individuals successively taking in quiet their places as worshippers.

Another person entered the door—even then a

* See "Quakerism Vital," by William J. Allinson.

man of mark!—and for many years afterwards a leading mind in the Society of Friends. Those who marvelled what the first might be, looked curiously at Richard Mott, as he walked very slowly up the aisle, to see if his countenance betrayed any token of recognition. They sat together, unknowing even whether they had one common faith. The stranger had intenser sensibilities, tenderer sympathies, acuter spiritual perceptions, than are often to be found in man or woman. He felt that he was the subject of doubt; and it is not easy to appreciate the feeling of forlorn isolation that oppressed him, as he sat, alone in a foreign multitude, tears trickling from his eyes, and also from those of the honourable veteran beside him, who felt strangely moved, though little suspecting that their hearts were knitting together with a bond of Christian brotherhood that should last through life. 'As unknown, and yet well known,' they silently worshipped together, until the stranger, having received help from on high, reverently bowed the knee to the God of the spirits of all flesh, giving unmistakeable evidence that he had an unction from the Holy One."*

The time of the Yearly Meeting at New York was near; and William Forster remained at the house of his kind friend Thomas Eddy, to recruit a little after his long voyage. The following extracts from his letters, chiefly to his wife, depict the state of his mind during this time of trial:—

* Thirty years afterwards the Editor heard this account, almost verbatim, from the lips of the venerable Richard Mott, at his own house in America—even then moved to tears while he dwelt with animation upon the scene of his first acquaintance with a friend whom he ever after loved "as bone of his bone."

1820. *6th mo. 7th.*—From an increase of weakness in my lame knee, I am again confined to bed. I was able to attend all the sittings of the Yearly Meeting, and I fully hoped that I should gradually recover from my lameness in a few weeks; but last Sixth-day it became more uneasy. On Seventh-day evening I went into the country, and attended two meetings on First-day; and on Second-day forenoon I was with friends at Mamaroneck, about twenty miles from the city, in the State of New York. The pain increased with travelling; and on my return I did not hesitate to yield to the kind solicitations of my friends to have further advice.

Dr. Mott called upon me yesterday morning, and examined the joint very carefully. He gave his opinion decidedly that I must desist from travelling, and be given up to a regular course of surgical assistance, or the consequences might be very serious. He has applied blisters, and put me upon a low regimen, and gives me encouragement to hope that, by submitting to such a course of treatment as he may prescribe, I shall be restored to the full use of the limb. This anticipation very much reconciles me to the detention; and I wish to cherish the hope that under the blessing of Divine Providence, I may, sooner perhaps than some may expect it for me, be in a situation to pursue my journey.

8th.—The Lord has given me a very sweet feeling of contentment and acquiescence with his will. It is a mysterious providence, but I must not doubt that it is in the way of his appointment; and I cannot but believe that in the end all things will be seen to have been working together for good. I feel myself to be in his hands. I have left all for his sake. I am given up to his disposal; and I must not, I dare not, distrust his faithfulness, his mercy, and love.

9th.—In my reading yesterday forenoon, such was the feeling that I have of the love and favour of the Lord, that I thought I could make the words of the Apostle my own without much deduction: "I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations." To-day I have had some sinking both of flesh and spirit, but I am not cast down into despair. The doctor was encouraging respecting the general appearance of my knee; but did not hesitate in giving

his opinion that I must remain here, under the same course of blistering, for several days.

12th.—May we not hope that our merciful Heavenly Father will continue to deal tenderly with us under our many trials: thus far we must acknowledge his mercies have never failed. Oh! may we never cease to love and serve Him; and then I cannot doubt He will continue his goodness through all these tribulations and to the end.

16th.—After the Monthly Meeting at New York, I fully trust that I shall see the way open for me to leave the city; but what may be the right course for me to take is very much hidden from me. My mind is drawn in many different directions; I feel such indescribable love and interest, both for Friends near at hand and afar off, such strong attractions to the most remote meetings of Friends in Tennessee and Indiana, and sometimes to Canada;—the field of labour is so widely extensive, so arduous and important, that no wonder I am often cast down with fearfulness and dismay in looking over it; but my heart is so much filled with the love of Christ,—I feel at times such support and comfort under my tribulation, and such inclination to look to the Lord alone for wisdom and strength, that, much as the circumstance of my lameness, and consequent detention, has been a deep trial to my faith, yet I cannot doubt but my being here is in the ordering of Divine Wisdom; and whether the sphere of my labours is more or less extensive, whether the Lord be pleased to lead me into these more remote parts, or to grant me a release after I have visited the more settled districts of the Continent, I have the comfort of a good hope that the end will be quietness and peace.

18th.—My love and affection to you all is, I am sure, far from being diminished; and I can well believe that, in my present distant separation, I am not less the object of your interest and love in consequence of the affliction which has arrested my progress. Remembering how I have been helped hitherto, I trust I am not without some lively feeling of gratitude to that power which has often succoured me in my low estate.

27th.—On First-day afternoon I got down stairs to tea,

and stayed till late in the evening. Several dear friends came in, and we enjoyed a quiet time of retirement together, in which I found my mind strengthened and comforted in solemn supplication; and afterwards in some expression of encouragement for those that were present, especially some of a heavy heart.

It is much my desire that in my humiliation I may be counted worthy to be made instrumental to exalt the glorious cause of the love of Christ, and be a strength and comfort to those who are humbly treading the path of faith and obedience.

The next First-day William Forster was able to attend the North Meeting at New York, respecting which he says:—

I was engaged, under some pressure of duty, in a line of close searching labour, and I trust under a feeling of that love which is not of the creature, boldly to declare the truths of the everlasting gospel, and to invite Friends to look to Christ as their Saviour.

Having left New York and crossed over to Long Island, he thus continues:—

Flushing, Long Island, 7th of 7th mo.—It had been a subject of much inquiry and deep anxiety with me as to my right course from New York. I set my mind on Wager Hull for my companion; and he being prevailed on to come with me, we came in his one-horse waggon to Flushing, crossing the ferry to Williamsburg in a boat worked by seven horses turning a wheel in the middle of the boat. It was a pleasant ride, and I cannot tell thee how much I enjoyed being once more, as I humbly believe, gone forth in the love of Christ, with the hope of making some progress in the work assigned me. Oh! if I can but feel a little of this, I am not anxious as to where I go, or what is the nature of the work assigned me. His heavenly presence is all I dare to ask.

We were kindly welcomed here by dear Samuel Parsons, a

valuable friend, of good influence in these parts; a sensible, enlightened man, and, withal, a minister in the church. His wife, a kind, good-spirited friend; and they have a family of young children as well ordered as most I have seen in this country.

W. H. is very careful of me, and I find I can ride in his easy carriage with scarcely any suffering. I do hope my knee is radically better. I now use nothing but my stick in walking, and seldom have any pain. It is a case that requires patience, and I wish to be thankful to have it so far restored as it is.

9th.—The meeting at Newtown was more to my relief and encouragement than at the beginning I could have hoped for. The people were some time in collecting; but at last the seats were nearly filled. I ventured on some expression in much weakness; but standing, I trust, carefully attentive to the feeling I believed to be brought upon me, I was enlarged in doctrine, and, under the strengthening influence of divine love, was led to plead with the people, some of whom I feared had but little serious thoughtfulness.

The meeting held at Flushing in the evening was not so largely attended by the people as I could have wished, nor did I find that relief and comfort in my labour which I had enjoyed in the morning.

10th.—The meeting at Jamaica—a small, handsome town—was held in a room at an inn; very few came: altogether it was a low, trying time.

11th.—I was brought into much feeling for Friends at a meeting at Cowneck, and strengthened in love to labour for their gathering unto Christ and their establishment in Him. We spent the evening and lodged at Edmund Pryor's; these dear friends have passed through much affliction. I trust I was enabled to speak a word for their comfort and help. It was to me a time of much openness of heart, and true tenderness of spirit.

12th.—We came through a pleasant country to Westbury. Here was a large meeting; the people in the neighbourhood almost all Friends in country life.

We were kindly received at Silas Downing's. He is a well-esteemed minister. His wife is a loving, tender-spirited woman, and I thought a judicious, well-concerned elder.

13th.—It was a large gathering at Matinicock, and to me a very trying time. I sat long under much heaviness of spirit. At length dear Phebe Field was engaged in prayer that the people might be drawn to a state of inward dependence upon the Lord. After which my way was opened to preach Christ and his salvation. I trust that, through the power of God, truth obtained its own dominion, and I was comforted in the Lord.

After attending some other meetings, he continues:—

16th. Jerusalem.—My mind is under much oppression almost wherever I go among Friends on this island. They seem to be drawing fast towards some of those things which occasioned so much desolation among Friends in Ireland.*

This morning I attended a meeting in a private house in the neighbourhood of Rockaway. It was not very large, but I think it was a time of as much liberty and power as any I have had since I came into these parts; and I spoke boldly the truths of the Gospel of Christ. I thought there were those to whom they seemed strange things, but for the time I was raised above the fear of men. Blessed be the Lord!

I wish to maintain a loving, humble, watchful spirit towards Friends in every place.

17th. Jericho.—I am now at dear Anne Willis's who made me so many cheering visits at New York. Retired to my chamber more peaceful and relieved in spirit than for some days past. This is a good Christian family; her son and his wife and their daughter are all living together. The meeting at Jerusalem is but a recent establishment. There was a pretty large company of Friends and others. I was brought very low before the time, and whilst we were together; but

* In reference to these, see chap. xiv. pp. 147-151.

at length, after some time of laborious exercise, I felt clear, and was cheered in spirit.

Here William Forster's account of this visit on Long Island abruptly closes. From other sources it appears that his sermon, and exposition of Christian doctrine at Jericho, from the words: "Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation," were very remarkable. But, of his movements during the two succeeding weeks no record has been found.

Though beautifully clothed with the spirit of meekness, humility, and love, it is not easy to avoid being struck with the tone of sadness which pervades some of his last memoranda. They relate to the attempts he met with to "pervert the Gospel of Christ," by which his sensitive mind was introduced into what was to him a new species of trial. It was one, however, with which the Christian Church, in its larger or smaller sections, has had to contend in every age, but over which, from whatever quarter, and through whatever agency it has arisen, sooner or later, the God of providence and of all grace has always caused his church "to triumph in Christ."*

* The history of German Rationalism presents at once a sad and a cheering illustration of this. One of the ablest and most impartial of modern writers, after reviewing the course of "German Protestantism," and noticing many antagonistic efforts against the simple Christianity of the New Testament, and its records, has the following remarks:—"The intellectual systems of a Kant, a Fichte, a Schelling, and a Hegel, are fallen to the ground; but the Gospel stands erect. The weapons by which a Strauss, a Bruno-Bauer, and others, once sought to give the death-blow to the Sacred History, lie rusting in our arsenals of theology; but the Scriptures remain unharmed, and have lost nothing of their validity."—"That the Scriptures represent the sufferings of Christ both as vicarious and piacular, is an undeniable fact, *now* questioned by few."

Really to overthrow the person and the work of the Saviour—one with the Father, and Himself God manifest in the flesh—is, indeed, simply impossible. The Light of *the Gospel of the* GLORY OF CHRIST* is inextinguishable. Nevertheless, the various attacks upon *the very Truth itself*, which are sometimes

—"*Der innere Gang des deutschen Protestantismus*," by Dr. Kahnis. Second German edition, 1860; pp. 257 and 261.

We may, indeed, greatly damage, if we do not entirely overthrow, our Christian standing, by trying to lessen the Divine authority of the Scriptures, on account of the difficulties which attend them; but every attempt to invalidate their testimony to any fact or doctrine of Christianity must be utterly futile. Just as well might we seek to blot out the sun, because astronomers have discovered that there are some spots on its disc. Both give a steady and a true light—notwithstanding. Christianity, and her divinely authorized records, have nothing to fear from the keenest research. The most adverse, remorseless, and destructive criticism, will not harm her or them. Would that all who engage in the contest were equally safe. For Christianity is invincible; she conquers all her foes, and gently blunts the suicidal weapons of her mistaken friends (1 Cor. iii. 11-15). Whatever may be the desiderata which still remain, with reference to the attacks made upon her by German Rationalism, it is needful only to look at the works of such men as Neander and Tholuck, Ullmann and Dorner, Nitzsch and Stier, and a host of others of like calibre, to gain some idea of the triumphs she has already won on the field of literature and science—of accurate history, impartial criticism, and enlightened exegesis—and to notice how the tide of her achievements is still steadily rising, from the lowest ebb of the Negative School to the high-water mark of sound, Christian orthodoxy,—not according to any sectarian formulas, but in harmony with the simple standard of Holy Scripture. In the love which thinketh no evil, it may be hoped that many who were driven away from that standard in America, or their descendants, will be led back to it by the Spirit in whose influence they still profess to believe.

* τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δοξης τοῦ χριστοῦ.—*Paul* (2 Cor. iv. 4.)
The ligtnynge of the Gospel of the *glorie of Crist.—Wicklif.*
Das helle Licht des Evangelii von der *Klarheit Christi.—Luther.*

We do not commit high treason against God—we are not idolaters—when we "honour the Son even as we honour the Father;" nor do we contravene any of the Divine attributes when we thankfully believe that "He gave Himself a ransom for all."

permitted, cannot but be cause of great grief to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and, long as William Forster had felt Him to be precious to his soul, he could not help being deeply pained by what was passing around him. Distasteful as it is to allude to the sorrowful events of those days, which are now matter of well-known history, full justice could not be done to the character and Christian labours of this devoted servant of the Lord Jesus, in the further prosecution of his mission in America, without a distinct reference to them.

Jericho, the place where William Forster was now enjoying the rites of hospitality in "a good Christian family," was the residence of Elias Hicks, through whose influence, mainly, and the propagation of the heterodox opinions he had unhappily imbibed, was brought about that state of things which had so deeply affected his mind. The contemporaries of Elias Hicks speak of him as a man of prepossessing appearance, good natural abilities, and an ardent temperament, with a considerable command of language and fluency of speech—yet, more conspicuous for boldness of assertion than for solid information and depth of knowledge. For many years he had occupied the station of a minister in his own meeting, and travelled, in that capacity, in different parts. Having acquired a good deal of popularity as a preacher, his position had become one of no small influence, and, for a time, that influence appeared to be for good. But by degrees, and under the specious guise of high spirituality, the doctrines he preached in public, and sought to disseminate in private,

became less and less scriptural; and, in the same proportion, more and more opposed to the recognised tenets of the Society of Friends. Heedless of the Christian care and judicious counsel of some of his friends who watched over him with tenderness and love, he persisted in his divergent course, till at last the distinguishing facts and fundamental truths of Christianity—the Deity and incarnation—the atonement * and intercession of Christ, together with some other points, were either ignored in his ministry, or distorted and rejected.† He gradually obtained many

* His sermons, published by his own adherents, fully justify these statements.

† It is not very difficult as in the present instance, so to misunderstand, and so to misrepresent the Christian doctrine of Atonement as to give it the appearance of implying "the wrath and natural implacability of God;" and, under this entirely erroneous meaning, to ascribe to those who believe in that doctrine the sentiment "that this wrath was *appeased*, and that the mind of God was *changed* towards us, by the suffering and death of an innocent victim." Nothing could be further from the true doctrine of Christians, or from that of the Society of Friends. They believe that God is a Being of infinite and *unchangeable* holiness and love; and so far from the gift and sacrifice of his only begotten son, having "*made* God placable," the appointment, in his infinite wisdom, of this *means* for our reconciliation, was the "glorious result, not of wrath, but of LOVE." "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 8-10. Nor is it less clear from scripture, that, in perfect unison with the Father, it was in his *voluntary love* that the Son "*gave himself* a ransom for all." "Christ *loved* the Church and *gave himself* for it." "Greater *love* hath no man than this, that a man *lay down his life* for his friends."

Whilst thus "we are not redeemed by corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," there is, moreover, good scriptural ground for the belief that the same *means* were appointed also for procuring for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, with all his awakening, regenerating, and sanctifying influences. Here then, "through the redemption that is in Christ,"

adherents ; yet it was not till seven years afterwards that he and his followers effected a separation and distinct organization, by which the religious community to which they had belonged lost nearly a third of its members.

When William Forster visited Long Island the evil was only partially developed, and had scarcely assumed any definite form. Much that created uneasiness was still kept in the background, and comparatively few were fully alive to the danger into which the Society was drifting.* Deeply as William Forster sympathized with the afflictions of the Church, few persons, similarly circumstanced, could manifest less of a controversial spirit than he possessed. But he was a man of quick perceptions, and accurate observation, as well as of large experience and sound judgment in "the things of God;" and he was not mistaken in at once detecting a strong resemblance between the disturbing elements around him,—as the consequence of E. H.'s influence,—and "those things which occasioned so much desolation in Ireland."† *There*, indeed, he had watched only the dying embers of a fire that was soon extinguished ; *here* he beheld the sparks, long hid in the combustible materials upon which they had fallen, breaking out into a flame which did not cease to spread till far

we have the forgiveness of sin through his atoning blood ; and deliverance *from* sin by the power of his Spirit ; in brief, the sum and substance of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—that wonderful display of the holiness and love—the justice and mercy—the harmonious blending without imperilling the perfect distinctness of the glorious attributes of the Eternal Jehovah.

* Stephen Grellet was among these few. See his Memoirs, vol. ii., Third edition, pp. 124, 125.

† See chap. xiv.

more extensive and permanent injury had been done. The "Defection" in Ireland, and the "Separation" in America, doubtless had much in common; nor were they without some historical connection. Different as were the moral and intellectual forces which were brought into operation in each, there is good reason to conclude that, apart from the personal agencies which influenced both, the reading of sceptical and Socinian works which appeared towards the end of the last, and the beginning of the present century, had much to do with preparing the way for the adoption of the mischievous notions which obtained currency, both in Ireland and in America. In both countries a false estimate of the person, the attributes, and the work of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, was combined with inadequate views regarding the authenticity and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures; and in both it was attempted to engraft the unsound opinions entertained by some of the leading characters in each, upon an erroneous and distorted representation of the scriptural views of the Society of Friends in regard to the direct and perceptible influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the believer in Jesus. A spurious and refined *spiritualism*, which refused to be controlled and tested by the clearly revealed truths of the Bible, was sought to be substituted for that healthy, sober-minded *spirituality of the Gospel*, one of the distinguishing features of which has ever been a cordial acceptance of all the facts and doctrines connected with the wonderful scheme of man's redemption through Christ, made known to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Nothing could be more opposed to the recognised principles of the Christian community of Friends than such an attempt to separate what God hath joined. So far was their belief in the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the practical importance of its application to the formation and upholding of the Christian character, from lessening their value for the plain testimony of Scripture, that they distinctly held that the non-accordance of any doctrine, sentiment, or procedure with the Sacred Records was a conclusive evidence of its being a delusion, and not among the "fruits of the Spirit." Accepting the Holy Scriptures as "given by inspiration of God," they did not hesitate to pronounce it an utter impossibility that between the Truth revealed in "The volume of the Book," or, as George Fox expresses it, "the words of God," and the work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, there should be any real contradiction,—the one always being in harmony with and confirming the other.

In accordance with this view were the many declarations of the faith of the Society, published, from time to time, on its behalf,* as well as the plain statements of individual members, soon after its rise and establishment as a distinct portion of the visible church of Christ. They afford incontestable evidence of its doctrinal soundness in the fundamental truths of Christianity, and clearly show that George Fox and the early Friends—to use the lan-

* See the "Christian Doctrine, Practice, and Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends." Fourth Edition, 1861. London: Friends' Book Depository, 12, Bishopsgate Street.

guage of William Penn—"renounced any pretence to the revelation of new matter in opposition to the *ancient Gospel*, declared by Christ Jesus and his Apostles." They were men who gave entire credence to all the facts connected with that "ancient Gospel," whether recorded in the Old or the New Testament; they cordially accepted all its doctrines, and were deeply imbued with its spirit.

They had "nothing to add" to the faith once delivered to the saints, and they were very careful not to "take away" anything from what had been clearly taught in the canon of Scripture. In a truly Biblical sense, and in common with all orthodox professors of the Christian name, they believed in the Being and Attributes of the Eternal Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—one God over all, blessed for ever. Nothing could be more clear than the testimony which they bore to the pre-existence and incarnation of the Son of God; the proper, eternal Deity, and the perfect manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ; the infinite value and extent of his propitiatory sacrifice, as an atonement or expiation for the sins of mankind; his resurrection and ascension, and his mediatorial intercession and reign. Clearly recognizing the universal corruption of human nature in consequence of the Fall, and the impossibility of salvation by works, they gathered round the person of Christ as their only hope of deliverance.* Through faith in Him alone, they

* If proof were needed of this, it might be found abundantly in George Fox's Epistles, and many other works of the early Friends. George Fox, indeed, made no pretension to what is called *systematic*, and he certainly had no sympathy with *speculative* theology; but it would be difficult to fix upon any point of Christian fact or doctrine, contained

looked for the forgiveness and reconciliation of the repenting sinner; while they thankfully acknowledged the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit, they insisted with peculiar emphasis upon the absolute need of his influence in the awakening and conversion of the unregenerate man; and in the preservation, sanctification, and guidance of the believer in Jesus. Nor less explicit was their avowal of the Scripture doctrine of the immortality of the soul; the resurrection, and the final judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

While,—in the full belief of all that "the Scripture hath said" in reference to these fundamental

in Scripture, upon which he did not entertain and express a sound opinion; and to which he did not give an important practical bearing. It is really refreshing to hear him exhorting his brethren after this manner:—

"O! be valiant for God's glory and his Truth upon the earth, *and spread it abroad*, answering that which is of God in every man and woman's conscience; knowing Him that has brought everlasting peace into the earth: so that the songs of salvation may be in your mouths; for it is said:—'With the heart man believes, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' So every true believer will confess to Christ—his salvation, his way, light, and life—his Prophet, Captain, and Commander—his Counsellor, and his High Priest, who has offered Himself for him—and who sanctifies him, and offers him up to God. To whom be all praise and glory for ever. Amen."

Nor less unequivocal was his testimony to the manhood and Deity of Christ, and his atoning sacrifice:—

"So Christ suffered in the flesh, and died, and was crucified, as he was man; not as he was God—the Word which was in the beginning; but as he was man, who bore the sins and iniquities of all mankind, and was an offering for the sin of the whole world; who tasted death for every man (all being in death in Adam), that they might have life through Christ," &c.

See "Epistles of George Fox," edited by Samuel Tuke. Second Edition; pp. 188 and 260.

truths,—they evidently felt it to be their especial duty in the Christian church, to call away their fellow-men from a dependence upon outward forms, and to invite their attention to the witness for God in their own consciences, distinctly setting forth the immediate and perceptible operations of the Holy Spirit, their teaching regarding this important part of Gospel truth was no dream of enthusiasm, or of mystical philosophy, but a doctrine of practical holiness,—the assertion of a great Christian privilege, in the undeniable fact that "the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God," according to the Scriptures.

In like manner did they base upon the revealed truths of the Bible their views of the universality of the love of God—of the presidency of Christ in his Church—of that which constitutes the call and qualification of all true Gospel ministry—of the worship of God in spirit and in truth—of "the baptism which now saveth," by which true believers are baptized into one body—of that which is comprehended in the true supper of the Lord, in partaking of which those who belong to Him do spiritually feed upon his body and blood, and know it to be meat indeed, and drink indeed, sustaining the life of the soul. It was evident, at the same time, that their distinguishing tenets respecting the inviolable rights of conscience and of private judgment in matters between the soul and its God, the universal priesthood of believers, and the repudiation of all hierarchical pretension and domination, all ecclesiastical impositions and exactions, the unlawfulness of all war and oaths under the Christian dispensation, their separation from the world and its spirit, its

maxims and fashions, and their opinions on some other points, rested upon the same foundation—the authoritative teaching of the Holy Scriptures.*

As an accredited minister of the Gospel in a Christian community entertaining such views, and cordially acknowledging them as his own, William Forster had gone forth, under a sense of religious duty, as an ambassador for Christ, to visit and to labour amongst his brethren, and the inhabitants more generally, of the American continent; and it was impossible for him not to be deeply affected, on finding, almost immediately on his entering upon this service, that there were those from whom better things might have been hoped, who were attempting to introduce "another Gospel, which he had not received." And what he had now seen was but the prelude to what awaited him during years to come, in the service of his Lord. It need not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that, in his letters written

* In thus referring to the early Friends, it is with no desire to foster an indiscriminate, much less a sectarian partiality for them, than which nothing indeed could be more opposed to the "universal spirit" (Penn) so earnestly inculcated by themselves; but "their work for the Lord" is here brought into view, with a full appreciation of the statement of the Yearly Meeting respecting them. "They were men of like passions as we are, compassed with many infirmities, and partaking also in some measure of the characteristics of the age in which they lived; of which traces are not wanting, both in their actions and in their writings. Whilst we thankfully commemorate the work and grace of God in them and through them, we would bear in mind the impressive language of George Fox, concerning himself and his brethren, 'We are nothing; CHRIST IS ALL.' Especially would we recur to their own emphatic and oft-repeated declaration, that it was no new Gospel they were called to preach. They had no new truths to communicate to the world. The Christianity of the New Testament, in its comprehensiveness and simplicity, was at once the extent and the limit of the message which their Lord had given them to declare."—"Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, 1857," p. 13.

now, and at later periods, a tone of sorrow and sadness should often be mingled with the voice of thanksgiving and praise. He knew his Saviour too well, and he loved Him too much, not to be deeply pained by everything which derogated from his glory. There was too much of the Master in the servant—too much in the disciple of his Lord, to allow him to remain insensible to anything that might seriously affect the present and everlasting welfare of those for whom Christ died—whom, as the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, He was so ready to gather into his fold.

CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

VISIT TO SOME PARTS OF THE YEARLY MEETINGS OF NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA.

After the conclusion of his visit on Long Island, William Forster returned to New York. Having tarried there a few days, he again left the city, and, accompanied by Robert Mott, he made a little circuit among some of the meetings of Friends in West Chester, Putman, Duchess, Ulster, and Orange Counties, in the State of New York.

Harrison Town, West Chester County, New York, 7th mo. 31st.—We had a remarkably heavy rain in the afternoon and evening, such as I have not often known. Next morning we came about twelve miles further, to the meeting at Mamaroneek.

I had requested to have a meeting appointed at New Rochelle. It was held at the house of Samuel Titus. As I yielded to the impressions brought upon me, I was enlarged both in doctrine and invitation; and I trust we did not meet entirely in vain. We had a pleasant ride back in the evening; the country was delightfully refreshed by the rain. The tree-frog and the locust were in high glee, and kept up their music till a late hour. Robert Mott had caught one of these little tree-frogs for me. It much resembles a small toad, and is so much the colour of the bark of the tree it frequents, as not to be easily discovered.

8th mo. 1st.—We went two miles to the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders at Purchase. I was very low

and flat most of the time; but, at last, venturing at some expression in a few broken sentences, as the way appeared to be opened before me, I was led on from one subject to another, to my own admiration. Under the influence of the love of Christ, I was concerned to encourage Friends to dwell deep and watchful in spirit, to beware of being carried away by the specious appearance of new things; and so to dwell upon the ancient foundation, and under the government of the Spirit of Christ, that they might do their part in checking this tendency in others, and that if a day of shaking should come, they might be preserved unmoved. I felt much unity with many dear exercised Friends; it was a time of much tenderness of spirit; and we were brought near one to the other in the love of our Heavenly Father.

During the Quarterly Meeting he was "much enlarged in doctrine, counsel, and invitation," and "I trust," he adds, "the love of Christ was felt to prevail to the comfort of many Friends." At a meeting, a few days afterwards, at Shappaqua, "his mind," he says, "was much clothed with love, and under this feeling he preached the Gospel of Christ both to young and old." Passing on to Croton Valley, where he also held a meeting, he came to Salem.

8th.—Under much feeling of the love of our Heavenly Father, I was enabled to speak of the means provided for the reconciliation and redemption of mankind, to my own satisfaction and encouragement. And in sympathy with some tossed, tribulated spirits, I sought to direct them to Christ as He is the only sure foundation. In my religious engagements I am kept in a state of much dependence, I think never more so, and, in my communications, I can seldom see further than one or two sentences before me. It is truly a humiliation to be called upon to step forward so much in faith, with so little apparently prepared for me; but if it is

really the way of the Lord's leading, it is much my desire that I may be kept humbly and obediently devoted to Him, without attempting to render my path easier than He sees to be good for me. After I had taken my seat, I felt the spirit of prayer, and, yielding to the impression, it was to my comfort and confirmation.

The following interesting little sketch occurs about this time :—

We are here in a land of plenty: abundance of apples and pears; the peach trees breaking down with the weight of fruit. The fields of Indian corn make a rich and luxuriant appearance; it is still green, but the ears are formed and beginning to ripen. The buckwheat is now in blossom, and enlivens the prospect wherever we go. Friends everywhere appear to abound in the necessaries of life. We are now at the house of one that I should suppose to be wealthy. He has a fine estate, well stocked, mostly cleared and improved by his own industry; he would pass in England for a respectable yeoman. They are famous for their bees in this neighbourhood. I think they have not less than forty-six hives just at the back of this house.

After having visited several meetings in the same district, he writes at Wawarsing :—

8th mo. 24th.—Our afternoon journey was a long stage of twenty miles; our horses perform admirably well, pulling up the hills cheerfully and steadily. Our road lay most of the way on the banks of the Randolph river. Some of the scenery really fine; the country well cleared and cultivated, mostly occupied by the descendants of Dutch settlers, who established themselves in these valleys long before the Revolutionary War. They have fine large houses, and make every appearance of living in ease and plenty. Most of them have

slaves,* but they bear the character of being remarkably kind and humane; indeed, the countenances and general appearance of the poor creatures speak well for the kindness of their masters. Such as we saw at the door looked well, fat, and decently clothed,—very different from what I must expect to see when I reach the other side of the Chesapeake. But slavery is abominably bad under its mildest modifications; its effect is everywhere distressing and degrading; and I could not but think this was strongly depicted on the negroes we saw to-day. It is a truly cheering consideration, and one in which I take my full portion of enjoyment, that a few more years, and it must entirely cease within the limits of this State.

We are now at the house of a Friend near the head waters of the Randolph river, surrounded with mountains on every side, which are thickly covered with woods to the very top. It is an old Dutch plantation, but the present inhabitants have been here only a short time. I fear they have a hard lot of it; but they have the necessaries of life and many of its comforts in a homely way. The women in this country are very industrious in spinning, &c.; they make their own house-linen, great part of their own and the men's common clothes, all their bedding, and in some families they spin yarn, which is woven into really handsome carpets. In these respects they far outstrip our English housewives, spinning wool in summer and flax in winter. But all this does not, in my apprehension, make up for that amiable and delicate refinement so indispensable to the female character; and to which I have been happily so much accustomed from early life. The evidence of true spiritual religion is not more perceptible here than with us.

Greenfield.—We left our quarters at Wawarsing early in the forenoon, after a delicious feast of water-melons, and had a pleasant and interesting ride to this place. The latter part of the way was, I suppose, a fair specimen of American

* Some lingering remains of the system in this State, where slavery had been abolished by gradual emancipation.

woodlands: the road hilly, what they call mountainous, narrow, and in some places full of stones and stumps. The new settlers are working their way into this mountainous wilderness: we came by several log cabins; and in two places they seemed to be clearing the country in good earnest, burning away the wood, and afterwards ploughing between the stumps. The timber is large and heavy oak, Spanish chestnut, hemlock, pine and sugar maple. The hemlocks I think the largest trees I ever saw, unless I were to except some of the firs on the Duke of Argyle's estate at Inverary.

Our meeting was at four this afternoon; their meeting-house, recently erected, was well-filled; most of the inhabitants were there. I was engaged in ministry, and trust it was under some feeling of the influence of that love in which the Lord Jesus came to be the Saviour of the world. Afterwards I had some enjoyment in near access to the throne of grace in humble, fervent prayer. At the close of the meeting, I was engaged to caution the people against the intemperate use of strong drink, and to speak tenderly and persuasively to some that I feared had been drawn into such excess. Not long after, I was informed that one who was a leading man among the Methodists in the settlement acknowledged that it came home to him. Poor creature! but a short time since, before he emigrated from England, he was, according to report, a sober, temperate man.

Thunder-hill, Neversink, 26th.—We have had a jolting journey of nearly five hours, up-hill and down, much of the way through the woods and over land nearly cleared, but have accomplished it with less difficulty than I at one time anticipated. Our carriage came through in safety, and the horses have done wonders. The novelty of a wilderness journey is much subsided, but still it is a kind of travelling not without interest. I begin to fancy I know a little about land and backwoods farming, and amuse myself with projecting improvements, and anticipating the progress of population in this wonderful country. We came through many fine districts to-day,—very large, heavy timber, the hemlocks and maples towering above the rest of the woods. There is

something solemn, and to my meditative mind not a little interesting, in beholding the face of the earth so much in the original clothing of nature. Here you see the vegetable kingdom in every stage of growth and decay; trees of different descriptions, evergreen and deciduous; some young and thrifty, others attained to their maturity in size and height; some beginning to decay, others still standing white with age. In many places the ground covered with trees recently torn up by the storms, or such as have been long mouldering away; some little more than a long heap of light earth, and beginning to do their part towards the nourishment of another generation. Thus we may suppose that nature has gone her rounds for the last four or five thousand years, and now the arm of man is arresting her progress, hewing and burning, and converting the forest into a fruitful land—the wilderness into a well-peopled nation.

After travelling for eight miles we came into the valley of the Neversink, a remote branch of the Delaware. The rivers we have lately left run into the Hudson, and empty themselves into the ocean through New York harbour. The low grounds near the river are richly covered with rhododendrons; they form a beautiful underwood, and earlier in the summer must be really delightful. Generally speaking the thickest of the woods are but thinly spread with shrubs, with but a small variety of more humble plants. Open places and cleared land abound in considerable variety, some very ornamental, such as I should be glad to transplant to our garden and shrubbery; and I do not despair, as the season advances, of collecting a few seeds. That beautiful crimson flower—I cannot recollect the name—which we have cultivated with so much care, grows on the banks of some of the streams; its dazzling brightness has often caught my eye.

We arrived at our friend W. M.'s in time for dinner. They have a pretty, well-cleared farm, and I suppose for this country would be considered comfortably settled. The house has a commanding prospect for many miles in several directions. The hills have a deep sombre hue—dark, thick forests overspread the country, variegated with patches of cleared

land; the fields of grass and buckwheat much enliven the scenery.

27th.—First-day morning. I saw there was the probability of a larger gathering of people than could be accommodated in the room usually appropriated to the purpose, and, after a little entreaty, I prevailed with our host to let his barn-floor be cleared and seated; it was soon got in order. I then withdrew, and sought to be retired. Looking round and seeing the people come in different directions out of the wilderness, my heart was made tender before the Lord; and the feeling of reverent thankfulness was raised within me that I had been made willing, and through his holy help assisted, to come so far to devote myself to his service in the gospel of his Son. I trust I felt accepted in my dedication, imperfect as I am sure it is, and had the hope our meeting would not be in vain.

There were more than the barn-floor could contain, and many sat round about the door. I sought to be staid in patient waiting before the Lord; and moving in the strength which I believe was graciously vouchsafed, I spoke largely of the love and mercy of God in that great salvation which is offered to man in the coming of Christ.

29th.—We were apprised of the probability of a small meeting at Thompson Town. Several of the Friends were from home, and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood generally gone to a Methodist camp meeting about forty miles distant, near the Hudson river. However, the largest room in the house was nearly full, and I trust, through the goodness of the Lord, we did not meet in vain.

For a while I was under some anxiety, desiring to come to a right conclusion whether to go 100 miles further into the interior, to visit a new settlement lately formed on the Susquehannah, or to pursue my course to the eastward. I believe I was given up to go; but hoped it would not be required at present. Oh! how much do I desire—words can but imperfectly describe the feeling—that I may be led by the Spirit of the Lord whithersoever in his wisdom He may be pleased to bring me.

9th mo. 3rd.—On First-day morning I was at meeting at the Close, not a large meeting. Thomas Titus, in a few words, very lively, called upon Friends to look to their standing and doing. I was afterwards much engaged among them in the way of plain dealing, and in the love of Christ in affectionately pleading with the careless, the formalist, and the disobedient, pressing them to look to Him for help and salvation. The good old man set his seal to the service of the day, and I parted from him in much affection. Dear, heavenly-minded creature! he seems at the very gate of the city, just ready to enter in. He is very cheerful, in a lowly feeling of himself and his unworthiness; but still he seems to have comfort in believing that the great Master acknowledges him amongst his servants. He rode with me in the carriage a few miles; it was really animating to see his cup so overflowing with gratitude and praise, often saying the Lord had performed his promises many times over. How many of the wise and learned would be willing to sacrifice all their aequirements, if, happily, they might be as well prepared to join the spirits of the just made perfect in the world to come. I think he is now in his eighty-third year.

A few days later William Forster returned to New York; and, without making much stay in that city, he proceeded to visit some of the meetings in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Of this engagement not many particulars are preserved. At the Quarterly Meeting at Haddonfield, he met with Richard Jordan, whose religious visit in Europe he remembered with much interest.

The meeting for worship (he says) was a very large gathering; dear Richard Jordan had an instructive communication in much power and brightness. I felt the awfulness of attempting to speak in that large meeting; but, venturing upon my feet with the little that was opened before me, the waters seemed to gather as I stood, and through the mercy

and help of the Lord I was made bold to preach Christ and his salvation.

His time was closely occupied among Friends in parts of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, till the approach of Baltimore Yearly Meeting drew him into Maryland.

CHAPTER XXII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

LABOURS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING.

Leaving the upper parts of New Jersey, William Forster travelled "through Pennsylvania upwards of 150 miles without appointing any meetings, only taking a First-day Meeting at Plainfield, the Monthly Meeting at Haddonfield, and the First-day Meeting at Darby," on his way into Maryland, with a view of visiting a few meetings in that State, before the Yearly Meeting to be held at Baltimore. Arrived within the limits of the first slave State he had seen, he writes to his wife:—

Hartford County, Maryland,
Ninth Month 27th.

I am now entered upon an entirely new field of labour. To-morrow I propose attending the meeting at West Nottingham; and I hope to be able to visit the six meetings constituting the two Monthly Meetings on this side of the Susquehannah, so as to finish off at Little Britain on First-day.

The circumstances of these Southern States, in regard to the poor slaves and free people of colour and their children, take such strong hold of my feelings, and occupy my mind so much, that it may be well for me to be sometimes drawn from the subject. On the plantations adjoining this estate, about a quarter of a mile distant, it is said there are thirty slaves. We took a walk this afternoon by the premises, and

saw some of the young people at work, picking up apples, &c. They looked happy, but thinly clothed. It is most affecting to hear of the state of moral degradation to which they are very generally reduced in this country—thievish, disorderly, and drunken; but, doubtless, there are many exceptions. In most Friends' families in these parts, and in many instances in the middle States, they have one, two, and, in some families, three black children, bound to them by indentures, generally taking them at six or eight years of age, and keeping the girls until sixteen, and the boys till eighteen, or it may be older. It is most truly interesting to see the little creatures so well cared for, and appearing so cheerful and comfortable, and in a way to be brought up to make a suitable provision for their own livelihood. They have two girls here; one perhaps nine or ten, the other but six years old. The old friend of the house seems fond of them, particularly the youngest, which she took at six years of age; she had brought up their mother from quite an infant. I am often troubled in thinking that in the midst of so much evil I can do so little real good. I am increasingly persuaded that it is by patient and diligent attention to the great work of education that we may hope for an improvement of their condition, and to see them rise in the scale of civilization; but it will be doubtless a very gradual work.

Of course thou wilt continue to use East India Sugar. I know it is doing but very little; but still, if it helps to revive the subject with such of our friends as may visit thee, it will not be entirely in vain. It is in this country a day of many scruples, and Friends are running into great extremes, I fear in many instances much beyond the leading of the Spirit; so that I often almost tremble for them and the cause, and believe it safest for me to dwell very deep in watchfulness before the Lord; and only to move in any of these things in the clear opening of the light of Truth, so far as I believe it is afforded me; and then to be very cautious of laying great stress upon the motive.

My heart is often sad, very sad; I am thickly clad with mourning; I trust in my better moments resigned to suffer for

the sake of my blessed and Heavenly Master; and sometimes, when most deeply plunged into these feelings, I am allowed to cherish a hope that it will not be always so—that He will yet more eminently reign in his own power and glory, and that the people will be brought again to behold in Him their Saviour and Redeemer; and to feel to what degree they have need of Him as their Advocate with the Father.

My great wish for myself under these trials is, that I may be kept meek and watchful over my own spirit, that I may not in any wise dishonour the cause increasingly precious to me, by any unsanctified activity of the creature, or by any attempt in my own will and strength to urge what I may believe to be the doctrines of divine mercy and love in the gospel of Christ, lest, instead of preaching Christ, and gathering souls to Him, I should preach myself, and be in danger of scattering, when I would wish to gather.

O, my love, mine is a slippery and dangerous path! Mayst thou be drawn into prayer for me that I may be so far preserved in true tenderness of spirit, as to feel the gentlest reproofs of the Heavenly Monitor, that I may deviate neither to the right hand nor the left, but simply pursue the path of duty, and leave the event to Him who can bless the simplest and plainest words of the most stammering tongue, and make them as fully instrumental to the promoting of his glory, as the most eloquent, argumentative and elaborate discourses.

East Nottingham, 19th.—I am not quite so weary this evening, but have been talking with the young man by the kitchen fire about the poor slaves until I have become so cast down and afflicted that I can scarcely turn my mind from the mournful subject. I am but little likely to write much to thy comfort, but I think thou wilt be truly glad to find that the poor blacks are generally treated with much less cruelty and oppression than formerly, better fed and better clothed than some years ago; but still the mental and moral degradation to which they are reduced, and into which those who hold them are of course liable to be plunged, is most deeply

affecting. To look at the enormous extent of this horrid system, without the hope of mitigation and eventual extermination, seems to be more than nature could endure. I wish to cherish the persuasion that conviction is working its way into the minds of the people, and that, seeing and feeling the evil, the time may not be far distant when they will be prepared to adopt measures gradually to relieve themselves of a burthen which some of them are already brought to feel to be heavy and grievous.

It is increasingly my desire that Friends, and all who can feel for the sufferings of their fellow-creatures, may be led to wait before the Lord, and to ask of Him for the counsel and strength necessary to the work of the day; that every succeeding generation may be prepared to take their part in this labour of love, and every individual given up to do all that he may be enabled; that, thus, through the help and blessing of the Lord, we may be working together towards the total abolition of this the worst and vilest system of oppression that was ever allowed or acknowledged in Christendom.

I believe there is much for Friends, both in England and America, to do in this great work; and it is my earnest desire that they may be clothed with the meekness of wisdom, and abide in the true fear of God, that all their proceedings may be in the leading of the Spirit of Christ, that there may be no appearance of a hasty, intemperate zeal, which, whilst it gives proof of not living in subordination to his government, cannot be expected to effect the reformation so ardently to be desired. It is good for us—by us, I mean the circle of our friends, and Friends generally—to be given up to the exercise, to dwell under the burthen, ready to embrace every opportunity to step forward to plead their cause, and devoted by every means in our power to improve their condition, and to contribute towards their advancement in the scale of civilized life, and, as we may be enabled, to lead them into a participation of the hope and consolation of the gospel.

Baltimore, 10th mo. 6th.—At meeting to-day, I sat between

Charity Cook and Evan Thomas, both of them upwards of eighty years of age, and fine specimens of strong American constitutions. Charity is not much altered since she was in England near twenty years ago, except that there is more of the old woman; but she must be of wonderfully firm texture, to have stood so many days' jolting over the rough roads of the Alleghany. I suppose it is not less than 600 miles from her own habitation, which I believe is in Indiana. She spoke in the meeting; and I thought there was a good feeling attending her communication, which was short,—more in the newness of the Spirit than the oldness of the letter, and this is particularly valuable in advanced age.

7th.—Just come from the first sitting of the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, where, in some feeling of the strength and influence of the love of Christ, I was led to sound an alarm, and to call upon Friends to become skilful in lamentation, because of the encroachments of the spirit of the world in the Society and in their families, and especially because of its influence over their tender children. In the afternoon I ventured to express a few sentences at the close of the meeting, but either I was not sufficiently watchful, or exceeded in words; I did not feel so well satisfied afterwards as I could have wished.

8th.—The meetings in the morning and afternoon were fully attended; it was thought that there were at least 2,000 persons both morning and afternoon. I cannot say that to me it has been much "of a feast of fat things,"—not much of the Gospel in its power and authority—and that is what I most earnestly wish to feel in all the ministry of Friends, especially in these large meetings. O, how I think I could have rejoiced, and how I believe it would have been greatly to the honour of the cause, and the good of Friends, if we could have rightly had these two large meetings held in true silence, and under the feeling of an awful solemnity! It is most affecting to me to be brought to believe that in many places Friends are much estranged from this acceptable and profitable exercise of mind, much afloat in speculation, and anxious for fine preaching and new doctrine. It brings me under the weight of heavy burthens, and often causes me to go

heavily on my way. But, alas! how many are the temptations among Friends in this land, to be drawn away from a state of inward, patient waiting—to feed the cravings of the people, and, with an affectionate desire for their good, to try to help them well on their way. I feel more and more, the longer I am engaged in this great work, that nothing but that which is in the life and under the power and authority of Divine love can gather to Christ, the great, may I not say the only, legitimate object of all true ministry.

9th.—The Yearly Meeting began this morning. During the pause which preceded the commencement of the business, I thought I had a bright opening in the power of Divine life; but did not obtain all the relief I could have wished, though I have not discovered that it was burthensome to Friends. It was particularly gratifying to me to observe with what cordiality our printed epistle was received; Gerard Hopkins thought it not only suited to their state, but especially valuable for its doctrinal matter. They agreed to reprint it for general circulation; this was very much to my satisfaction, and gave me such a gleam of comfort that I could have wept for gratitude and joy. I trust it is as much to my delight to see our Lord and Saviour honoured before men, as it is to my grief and distress, when I have to believe that that reverence is not paid to his inconceivably exalted and glorious character which is eternally his due.

As the meeting proceeded with the answers to the Queries, I made a few remarks on the advantages of a more frequent reading of the Scriptures than on one day of the week; wishing to believe that Friends were generally concerned to collect their families at least on First-days; but I fear that even so much as that is not so common a practice as might be desired. Speaking of the benefit of such opportunities in much brokenness and simplicity, I told Friends of the comfort it was to me, in my present remote separation from all most dear to me, to recur to some of the opportunities I had enjoyed, when thus present with my own little family. The subject of books, and especially the Scriptures, as well as of a religious and restrained education, has so much hold on me,

and I feel so much of its importance in almost every place, that I believe for my relief and peace of mind I must be willing to follow it up as way is opened for me.

12th.—At nine, there was a sitting of the Meeting of Ministers and Elders, which I think has left a more satisfactory impression than any other. I was strengthened to speak to my own relief, and I trust it was for the instruction and encouragement of others; particularly hinting at the spirit of the present times, and in sympathy with exercised Friends wishing them to be guarded against the speculative views which had been entertained by many of high standing in the Society, and are spreading very much among Friends of all descriptions.

After a short interval, I attended the meeting for worship in the large Meeting-house; and as the way opened for me, I was enlarged in a plain simple way, and enabled to bear testimony to Christ and his salvation.

The Yearly Meeting at Baltimore closed on the 13th; and, with Robert Mott still for companion, William Forster set off the next day in the prosecution of the work before him. Continuing his narrative, he says:—

We came that night to the house of a Friend, a few miles from Indian Spring Meeting-house; and on First-day were at the meeting, and afterwards came to a Friend's house, five or six miles further on the road. It was a cold, heavy rain most of the day; and I felt chilled and uncomfortable, and next morning was poorly and much discouraged about our journey. We had a long day's travel before us—forty miles—to a very small meeting remotely situated, and very seldom visited; but, the day promising to be fine, I plucked up courage to persevere. At the small, miserable village of Friendship, there was nothing to be got for ourselves; and we fed our horses in the street. I was very poorly and cold when we arrived late at the Friend's house; the roads having been bad, and very hilly; I think we had upwards of 110 gates to open in the course of the day. It is quite a slave country; the

planters make their money by the growth of tobaeeo; as in many parts of Maryland where we have been, the country seems running back again into a wilderness. Thousands of aeres are overgrown with brambles and young forest-trees. Things wearing such a forlorn appearance is indescribably affeeting to one's spirits; and then the poor slaves!—but the general report is, that they are more kindly treated, and to many of those who are brought to think they have a property in them they are become a heavy burthen; so that, upon the whole, the more I see and hear, the more I am inclined to receive eneouragement about them, especially as it regards the State of Maryland.

Next morning I was worse; but the meeting being appointed at the Cliffs, I went, little expecting to be able to stay long; but to my admiration, though really ill, I was for some length of time engaged in ministry. We went to a Friend's house to dinner. I thought it best to return to A.'s, and they soon sent for a doctor. I was seriously ill the next day, and then took to my bed, to which I was confined with very little intermission for fifteen days; the fever was very high; my head very painful. Though I continued extremely low, and was very thoughtful about my situation, I was enabled to lay hold on a sustaining hope that the worst was over; and that in great mercy I should be raised up again. My disorder assumed the appearance of a remittent fever, whieh I knew to be dangerous; but still, though death and eternity were much before me, I was generally preserved in a steady belief that I should recover. Oh! how earnest were my prayers for life, offered in humble submission to the Divine will; not so much for my own sake, for I had very bright and animating prospects of the peace, the blessedness, and glory of those that die in the Lord. I never had such views and feelings. I wish to say but little about them; for I cannot but regard them as amongst those things scarcely lawful to be uttered. But for the time it seemed like laying hold upon eternal life; and, in being admitted into the Divine presence, sueh strong and satisfying persuasion of the eternal oneness of the Father and the Son,

that if I had doubted it before, I think I never can again. O, there was such power and glory, such peace and joy, in the beatific vision; words are altogether inadequate to the lowest description of that which, I believe in unutterable condescension, was unfolded to my understanding. But on my dear wife's account, and for the sake of our precious child, my beloved parents, and others most dear to me in life, I trust my prayers were regarded; and in the mercy and kindness of our Heavenly Father I was again and again assured that I should be brought safely through. About this time a brother of the Doctor's was taken very ill of the same fever, so much so that for some days his life was despaired of; and he, being obliged to be much with him, and besides being a very young man, I thought it right to send a messenger to Alexandria, about forty miles distant, to inform Friends of my situation, and to request they would send me a physician. On Fourth-day, the 25th, Dr. Dick arrived, a Friend and minister in much esteem; he joined the Society about six years ago, and is now retired from practice as a physician. He is considered one of the most eminent in the country; and is one that attended General Washington in his last hours. I believe he may be regarded as a sound, well-established Friend. He came partly out of duty, and in much love, and entirely devoted himself to me. He was assiduous and affectionate in his attentions, almost constantly with me, and watched me as if I had been his own son. I fully believe my recovery, under the Divine blessing, is much to be attributed to his care and medical skill.

William Forster was now able to resume his labours, and continues his memoranda:—

11th mo. 6th.—On the evening of the 27th, we were greatly surprised by the arrival of three Friends from Baltimore, Gerard Hopkins, Andrew Ellicott, and Dr. Gillingham. They had heard of my illness, and came in love to see me. Such unexpected kindness was at first a little overwhelming; the distance is seventy miles, but they came in a few hours by

the steam-boat. I came down stairs on Fourth-day, and the weather being fine and warm, I left on Fifth, still very weak; but I bore travelling to Marlboro', twelve miles, beyond my expectation. We were up early the next morning, hoping to ferry the Patuxent before breakfast; but, after waiting a long time at the water-side for the boat, we thought it best to drive off to another, seven miles distant. When we reached the ferry, the wind was high, and the boat on the other side; concluding it would be unsafe to make the attempt to cross, we soon determined on driving fifteen miles up the river to a bridge. We went to the house of a planter, two or three miles distant, whose hospitality soon cheered me up. He was descended from Friends, and very open to me. I spoke plainly to him about his slaves, though in much love and tenderness. I found he was burthened on the subject, but seemed to want courage to execute their manumission; but, his conscience being tender, I hope that he will have no rest until he has liberated them.

Next morning we came nine miles to breakfast, and reached Washington, eighteen miles. I went to meeting yesterday morning; there was a scattered company, mostly English. We came away soon after dinner, crossing the west branch of the Potomac, on a bridge nearly a mile in length. We came here in time to attend the afternoon meeting, but I did not feel myself equal to the exertion.

8th.—A warm and hearty welcome from my dear friend A. M., at Waterford, on Third-day evening, occasioned me soon to forget all the perils and disagreeables of a journey through a very poor, neglected, uncultivated country. I had a very pleasant visit—a homelike family. I went to their meeting at Fairfax, just by the village, on Fourth-day morning. As I believed the way to be opened for me, I was engaged, under the influence of much love, to express my interest for different states, and to plead affectionately with the young people; there was also a word of encouragement for such as I believed were desiring to serve the Lord.

A. M. drove me over to B. T.'s, near Goose-creek meeting-house, yesterday afternoon. This is an extensive settlement

of Friends (see John Woolman's Journal, chap. iv.) of about sixty or seventy years' standing; there are some very fine farms, of from 100 to 300 acres, occupied by Friends of respectability, and some of them really wealthy, industrious and frugal, living in comfort and plenty. I was at their week-day meeting this morning, in which I believe that, in the extension of heavenly love and mercy, the consolations of the gospel were shed abroad amongst us, and there was, I trust, a powerful invitation to gather unto Christ, the fountain of living waters. I thought strength was renewedly vouchsafed to bear decided testimony to the power and faithfulness of redeeming love, and to speak for the confirmation and support of those that were weary. If it really was the Lord's work, to Him be all the praise. I believe I can safely say, there was so little of the working and contrivance of the creature that I am sure it can lay claim to nothing of itself. Afterwards I was at their select meeting; they have no minister among them—a rare thing for this country. I suppose it is the largest meeting within this Yearly Meeting, except Baltimore.

I came here this afternoon; this is a comfortable habitation; plain, truth-like Friends, they seem to be a family of love, and to have the necessaries of life in abundance. The dear old man, besides being of sound religious judgment, pleases me much in his allusion to the good old times when he was young under the British Government; the loyalists are now pretty much gone, and it is not common to hear the English nation spoken of with respect.

10th.—At Southfork meeting. They are but a small company of Friends; but the people of the neighbourhood hearing of the meeting, many of them came. I was engaged in ministry, and afterwards in supplication. My concern is so generally for Friends, that I can seldom unburthen myself when they are mixed with a large number of other people.

Winchester, 11th.—The morning wore a very discouraging aspect, the ground covered with snow. I walked part of the way up the Blue Ridge. My knee, though it seldom pains me, is not strong, and I am sorry that I cannot relieve the

horses quite so often as I could wish. The Shenandoah was fordable; we should call it a fine large river. The fords and ferries are not less of a trial to my extreme timidity than I expected. I believe that but few have the same constitutional timidity to try them; but I wish, under all these conflicts, to take encouragement in remembering that whenever I have been given up to serve the Lord in the way of his leading, I have never dared to suffer the apprehension of personal danger to interfere with what I have believed to be my religious duty. And in the seasons of greatest peril, to the praise of our Almighty Helper let it be recorded, I have always, either sooner or later, found Divine support to be near. Dear John Grubb's feeling for me, in that strengthening passage he quoted in his last kind and comforting letter, has been very helpful to me, both in my trials at sea and during my travels:—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," &c.

12th.—At Winchester I ventured on the appointment of a meeting for the people of the town. The evening was particularly unpromising, and, though the place contains near 3000, very few came. At first I was discouraged; but being given up to communicate what I believed to be brought before me, I was favoured with a quiet and peaceful mind.

13th.—At a meeting at Mount Pleasant, with a few families, members of Winchester Meeting, collected at the house of one of their number. The meeting was, more than some others, to my satisfaction and relief.

I have now attended two Yearly Meetings in America. That at Baltimore was not so large as that at New York. There was not that solemnity, nor that religious concern for the prosperity of the body, that has so frequently of later years marked our Yearly Meetings in London, so that on the whole they have been more to my discouragement than to my strength and confirmation.*

* It was in these two Yearly Meetings that unsound opinions ultimately spread the most widely. In both, the reduction of the number of members, in consequence of the separation, was very large.

14th.—At R. G.'s, near Dillon's-run Meeting-house, Hampshire. We are are now quite among the mountains, and about seventy miles from the nearest meeting within the Yearly Meeting of Ohio. This family are settled in a secluded valley, and have a sufficient portion of cleared land to supply them with the necessaries of life. The father descended from the good old stock of Welsh Friends in Pennsylvania; they have been settled here about thirty years, and none of the English Friends having found their way into these mountains, it may be supposed to be rather a remote and solitary corner.

15th.—Since I left Alexandria, I have had very rough travelling—mountains, rocks, and very bad roads; the weather has been very winterly; but yet I have been preserved from relapse, quite to my own admiration. We find fine large fires in every country house; but their houses are cold, and in many little things I find a great change; and these, to a weary traveller, are often very important to his comfort and safe progress. My horses perform to admiration; they draw the carriage up the hills with great spirit; and it is quite curious to see how carefully they take it down over the rocks, and among the stumps; such roads as it would be difficult to describe.

16th.—Mulberry-grove, Frederic County. The meeting at Dillon's-run yesterday morning, was, I trust, through the favour of the Lord, a time for the encouragement and strength of those who desire to walk uprightly; and I was engaged to call upon others to seek to know how far they were prepared to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. I had peace in my feeble endeavours to serve the Lord in that little meeting. Our kind friends had prepared us a plentiful dinner; we made a hasty repast, and soon settled into quiet. I trust there were some to whom it might be a time of encouragement and refreshment. In the fresh extension of divine mercy and help I feel given up to the disposal of the Lord, and have scarcely a wish to be in any other place than that which may be appointed me in the ordering of his

wisdom. I feel recruited in health, but not yet fully recovered.

In allusion to the serious illness of his beloved friend Priscilla Gurney, of which he had been informed, he says :—

The account of dear Priscilla Gurney affords but little hope of her being spared to us much longer. I have deeply felt the prospect of parting with a friend so valuable to us, and so much beloved. But I have lately been brought to give her up in quiet submission to the Divine will, especially since I enjoyed those bright and animating prospects of the peace and glory of the heavenly kingdom with which I was favoured during my sickness. I sometimes think perhaps her purified spirit is already entered—that she is now united to the heavenly host, for evermore to live in the presence of Him whom with such faithful and sincere devotedness she desired to serve. And some of us know, that, short as may have been her earthly pilgrimage, it was not without its tribulations; but now, I trust, if she be really gathered, she is in the possession of the fulness of unalloyed and everlasting joy and consolation.*

William Forster reached Baltimore about the middle of Twelfth Month. There he felt it to be required of him to visit Friends in their families. In looking at this engagement, which he had long had in view, he says :—

I look very seriously at the length of time it may necessarily occupy ; and when I consider the number of meetings that might be visited in the three or four weeks which may be devoted to such an engagement, it is truly hard to attain to all

* Her decease did not take place till Third Month 25th, 1821. See a Memoir respecting her, by Susanna Corder.

that resignation I would wish to enjoy. But after all, as John Bunyan says, "the way is the way;" and there we must leave it, and try to hope that He in whose mercy we desire to confide will not suffer me to be drawn into such a detention unless it be really in the ordering of his heavenly wisdom.

12th mo. 17th. Baltimore.—I spent a little time in Gerard Hopkins' family; he is a particularly interesting Friend, kind and agreeable, sound in faith and practice, evidently jealous of these modern innovators. He invited me to go with him to a reading meeting with the young women in this immediate neighbourhood. It is conducted very much under dear Gerard's fatherly care. There were upwards of twenty collected, young women and girls, besides several matronly Friends. They read in the Testament, and afterwards in Penn's "Rise and Progress." There was a very gratifying appearance of seriousness and attention, and it is certainly promising of good. It may, perhaps—and how ardently do I desire that it should—lead to a more frequent reading of the Scriptures in families.

On the next day he had a conference with the ministers and elders and overseers, respecting his proposed visit to the families of Friends in Baltimore; and meeting "with as full an expression of unity and encouragement as he could desire," he at once entered upon the engagement. In the course of it he remarks:—

12th mo. 29th.—We dined at Nicholas Popplein's, the only survivor of three brothers who professed with Friends at Amsterdam, and about fifteen years ago came into this country. He supports the character of a consistent Friend; and I could not but think him a man deeply rooted in religious experience, and of very sweet influence over his household, which consists of four nephews and a niece, an interesting group of young Germans, two or three of them lately come from the neighbourhood of Frankfort. They

attend Friends' meetings, and one of them is a useful member of the Society.

1821. *1st mo. 3rd.*—In this most serious and arduous engagement my path is attended with peculiarly trying exercise. I seem to tread on very tender ground; but, whilst I am seeking to follow our great Lord and Master in simplicity and humility, I am not without hope that He will lead me on safely to the end.

12th.—On Second-day week we set off in a sleigh on a little tour among the country Friends. It was a hard frost,—the snow very deep,—the roads in good order,—a delightfully pleasant mode of travelling in this country. On Third-day evening I attended a large meeting in a Methodist meeting-house at Fell's-point, the part of the city lying nearest to the river. I think there must have been 800 or 1000 present, at a moderate calculation. After some time of silence I was engaged at considerable length in ministry, and I trust Friends were not burthened.

On First-day morning I went out into the country about three miles, to a public meeting, in rather a thinly inhabited neighbourhood. The morning was particularly unfavourable. The meeting was small; and yet there was enough to be felt to satisfy me that I was in my proper place. The afternoon meeting in Lombard-street was a time of rather unusual relief and encouragement. I was much engaged, and had not felt more power at any time since I came into the city. On Fourth-day it was rather a low time with me at the week-day meeting; but, venturing with a gentle opening, I was much enlarged in love, calling upon the careless and worldly-minded, if it were possible, to alarm them for the safety of their souls.

After mentioning a coloured man who had driven him about, he says:—

Free blacks make capital servants. It seems an employment very much suited to their taste, especially to assist in the house. They are generally well-behaved, and really polite,

so very different to the white people here, and to our country people in England. Many of them are tall, handsome, well-made men; and, when going to their places of worship at Baltimore on First-days, they are equal in their appearance to our country people of superior rank,—handsomely dressed in the first style,—and even many slaves make a most genteel appearance—personal vanity seems to be one, and not the least, of their besetting infirmities. The women are not unhandsome, constitutionally prone to extreme corpulence, and do not seem to aim quite so much at genteel life. They are neatly dressed on First-days. Last evening, at a meeting on the premises of a cotton-factory, believing there was an opening for ministry, I followed a very gentle current and, in much feeling of love, I was enlarged on the doctrines of the gospel. That night and this morning the cold was generally thought to be more intense than had been known for twenty years; a little before sunrise the quicksilver stood 12 degrees below zero.

1st mo. 15th.—I went to meeting rather solitary in spirit and depressed. I ventured on the expression of a few sentences; and standing, I trust, given up to the Lord, I was much enlarged, and I suppose kept the meeting considerably beyond the usual time. It was partly in faithful, plain dealing with the careless and carnally minded, and in affectionate pleading with the young people. I felt a little comfort afterwards.

18th.—I was brought very low in the public meeting in the evening, into much trembling of spirit for the honour of the precious cause of Truth; but through heavenly mercy I was helped along to my comfort. I was concerned, both in that meeting and the one preceding, to speak much on some of our testimonies, as well as on the general doctrines of Christianity. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as sufficient for the work of our salvation—Christ the light of the world, and the Lord Jesus our Mediator and Advocate with the Father—in what I believe to be the fresh springings of divine life, are the subjects of my ministry wherever I go. It is most earnestly my desire that it may never be in the form

nor in the oldness of the letter, but always under the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes confirming to me to find how I am generally, sooner or later, I trust I may say without any contrivance of my own, brought round to this point. But still I want a dear, feeling companion, to tell me when I depart from the life, and become burthensome to that which is living in the hearts of faithful Friends.

20th.—I felt more than some times of the animating influence of divine love on first sitting down in meeting. I was largely engaged in ministry, on the spirituality of divine worship, the inspiration of the Scriptures,—what they are and to what they testify,—and I trust a word of comfort was given me for the afflicted. These three meetings have neither of them been very large; but perhaps I may be allowed to say they were remarkably quiet, solid opportunities.

22nd.—Philip Thomas took me in his coach to the Penitentiary. The meeting was appointed for ten o'clock. The convicts were gathered punctually at the hour, in one of their large rooms. There were about 300, mostly young men and middle-aged, apparently healthy, well-clothed, and, I should suppose, well-fed; perhaps the largest part were people of colour. They behaved with much stillness; some of them were very attentive, and I trust a few capable of real feeling.

I ventured, under a sense of duty, to seek for an opportunity at the Alms-house. P. T. kindly entered into my views, and cheerfully exerted himself to obtain permission. We went to see the poor people in the evening; there might be 200 men and women gathered in one of their large rooms. I had some sweet feeling of heavenly love among them; and I trust I was enabled to speak a word of comfort to the poor and afflicted, and a word of warning to the awakening of some gross and desperate sinners.

23rd.—A general farewell meeting with Friends of the city was largely attended, especially by those in the upper part of the city. A sweet and solemn feeling came over us in the time of silence, and something was to be felt, I trust by many, of the influence of that one Spirit by which the Lord's people are baptized into one body. For a while I did not know but

that it might be best for me to sit in silence, and to part under such a precious feeling. But believing I could discover a little opening for the expression of a few words, I ventured to utter them, and was much enlarged in the love and power of Christ; speaking of the blessedness of that fellowship which is in the truth, and, under the prevalence of heavenly love, labouring to gather all into the unity of the Spirit, that, in the harmony which prevails under the government of the Prince of Peace, the Lord's work might be carried forward, and made more eminently to prosper among them. In much simplicity and faithfulness I spoke that which was brought upon me, being for the moment lifted above the fear of man. I pleaded honestly with those who had departed out of this unity, inviting them, in the day of the Lord's mercy, speedily to return.

There was also a word for the encouragement of upright Friends and I had very sweet feeling with some of the dear young people, who, I trust, under all their finery, were made tender in spirit before the Lord. Towards the close of the meeting I was much poured forth in thanksgiving and fervent supplication. Some of those, on whose account I had suffered so deeply in sympathy with their state of bitterness and separation, were not forgotten in my pleading before the throne of grace. The meeting separated under a precious, solemn feeling, and I parted from Friends in much love. In the course of the visit we had 275 sittings. I left with a peaceful mind, taking leave of my dear, kind friends in Pratt-street in much love.

Another week was occupied in visiting some of the remaining Meetings in Maryland. In moving about among the members of his own community, William Forster was accustomed with something of statesman-like interest to keep his eye upon the condition of society at large; and some of his notes indicate that, in this direction, he was by no means a superficial observer. At this juncture he remarks upon the

aspect, both of general and sectional affairs, as they appeared to him, more than forty years ago.

Many with whom I have conversed have very fully confessed that, notwithstanding all their boast of equality, there is as much of the pride of aristocracy to be found among them as in any other nation, without the respectful decorum, the quiet, contented submission, the moral and social refinement, and the opportunities for advancement both in arts and learning, generally to be found in those nations in which Divine Providence has permitted mankind to move in different circles. Oh, if all were preserved under the regulating power of his love, how would the order and harmony of his creatures redound to the praise of his great and excellent name! I think that I can easily discover that many of those, who of later years have emigrated from England, have brought their factious, disaffected feeling with them; and, when they get under a government one might suppose to their heart's desire, the same uneasy spirit follows them, and they have no rest.

Our Society partakes much of the complexion and temper of the nation; their eyes are open to our defects as Englishmen, and I think I can perceive that in many there is even an increasing prejudice against "the old countries," forgetting that whatever is excellent, either in law or religion, so far as outward means are concerned, they have received from their poor old mother, whom they now treat with disrespect almost bordering upon contempt. I have many anxious moments of serious thoughtfulness respecting the union that should subsist between the Society in the two countries. The connexion of consanguinity, which did so much towards binding together our forefathers, is now scarcely a tie; every Yearly Meeting considering itself entirely independent one of the other, there is very little, except occasional visits, and our Epistles (which, much as they may seem like a form, must not be given up), to keep us together.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

VARIOUS ENGAGEMENTS IN PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING.

William Forster now spent rather more than six months in different parts of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; but of his religious services during this period only fragmentary accounts are preserved.

He was once more in a *free* State, and on re-entering Pennsylvania he writes:—

2nd mo. 11th.—We left our friends at Gunpowder, on the 31st of last month, and reached York in the evening. About half-way on the road we crossed the boundary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania. It was soon to be discovered that we had left the evils and iniquity of slavery behind us. The land is divided very much into small fields, and cultivated by the industry of the proprietor. There is a cheefulness and appearance of comfort and plenty about the houses of the Pennsylvanian farmers very different to that of the Maryland planters. In many parts of Maryland and Virginia the very soil seems to be languishing under the curse which the oppressions of its proprietors have brought upon it. The country is laid out in very large estates; they grow wheat and tobacco for exportation, and the large fields of Indian corn, in some instances from 50 to 100 acres, go towards the support of the poor negroes in vegetable and animal food. The number of swine with which the country abounds is almost incredible; and if they can barely make out to keep themselves and their slaves in the necessaries of life, and sell a little of their produce to provide themselves in luxuries,

they seem to have no desire beyond it. The planters, though living in ease and high life, are almost all poor, and often in debt. But few have anything to leave their families but their land and their slaves. As tobacco grows best in a newly-broken soil, and they have no regular system of agriculture, after the land is worked out they throw it up for a few years, and then take it in hand again. The most wretched feeling I have experienced was produced by the appearance of the country in those districts once cleared and cultivated, but now turned up again to the wilderness, and overrun with briars and young wood. The mansions of some of the largest slaveholders are extensive, but without either neatness or elegance. Many of the farm-houses wretched in the extreme, and the cabins for the slaves miserably disgusting. Yet I leave them for the present rather cheered with hope than sunk in despair. Light is spreading among the people; they are better educated, and generally allowed to be more humane than their fathers. They have agricultural societies, which will I trust be very beneficial to the community; and many seem to have a pride in having their slaves well fed and better clothed, and I believe there is rather an increase in the number emancipated, especially in Maryland.

About this time William Forster, in the course of his visit to the meetings in this part of Pennsylvania, attended the Monthly Meeting at York, respecting which he remarks:

I trust I was a Barnabas to some of the mourners in Zion in their little company. Dear Margaret Elgar was affectionate to me, and very sweet and tender in spirit; the precious old woman would have us to tea with her. She is a beautiful specimen of Christian discipleship in old age—so very humble and loving. She has been a woman of sorrow, and for many years a faithful labourer in the work; and, although upwards of eighty years of age, talked as if she had seriously thought of going over the mountains once more. Dear woman! she said—and it did me good to hear it—that she had been east,

west, north, and south, and did not know that she had ever done any good in her life. I parted from her in much love; her eyes were full when she said, very emphatically, her heart went with the work.

Pursuing his travels among Friends in the centre of Pennsylvania, he came to Harrisburg, the seat of government of that State. He felt it his duty to appoint a meeting for Divine worship there, to which the inhabitants of the city were invited. Friends obtained the use of the State-house for the purpose. The Assembly was then sitting, but they adjourned in time for the meeting. In recording the circumstance, he says:

I was laid very low in feeling, lest the blessed cause should suffer either through my unwatchfulness or presumption. The meeting being appointed at seven, I had some opportunity to seek to be gathered into quietness before the Lord, and was comforted with the hope that He would be mercifully pleased to uphold and enable me to serve Him in whatever way He might call for my dedication. There were, I think, not less than six or eight Friends in the Assembly and Senate. Several of them met us at the inn. They seemed to feel for me, and perhaps for themselves too. We went a little before the time; the house was then nearly full, the members at their seats, some of them in conversation, others writing, &c. I was almost alarmed at the first appearance of our congregation; but they placed me in the speaker's chair, and Friends taking their seats by me, the people soon became more settled, and in a little while there was a very general silence. I sought to wait upon the Lord, and to be deeply and attentively devoted to the leading of the Spirit of Christ. It was not long before I thought I could discover the path appointed me in the service of our Lord. The fear of man was much taken away, and in plainness and simplicity I delivered what I believed to be brought upon me. I was much enlarged on the necessity of a religious,

self-denying life, on the spiritnality of the Christian dispensation, and on the ministry of the gospel and divine worship. The people were very attentive; and, considering that many were supposed never to have been at a Friends' meeting before, they were remarkably quiet and serious. Towards the close of the meeting I ventured on my knees in thanksgiving and solemn supplication; and, soon after, the meeting separated at a late hour, I thought under a very good feeling. I was much bowed in spirit for the help which I believed had been afforded, and Friends were very kind.

A few days later he was at a meeting at Lancaster, a town in the same State, then containing about 8,000 inhabitants; of this he remarks:—

We went early to the meeting-house, and to my surprise we found it nearly full. There was much quietness and order; and we soon settled, as I thought, under a good feeling. I was largely engaged in ministry, preaching Christ and his salvation. I trust it was not of my own contrivance; and I could not but believe there was an ear open to receive the truths of the gospel in their own simplicity. I felt much interested for some that I believed to be in a seeking state of mind. May it please the Lord to prosper his own work in every awakened and enlightened soul! There was a remarkably solemn quiet at the close of the meeting, affording, I trust, ground to believe that we had not met without the approbation and blessing of our Lord.

In the course of the same month he attended the two Quarterly Meetings at London Grove and Calne, and the meetings constituting them. He was frequently brought very low in spirit. His letters from home told him of the death of valued elder Friends—bringing him to feel for others whom he loved and honoured. In reference to the continued illness of Priscilla Gurney, he says:—

What cause of thankfulness, on her account, that she is thus tenderly dealt with, as it were led gently along to her heavenly mansion! I have much sweet comfort in thinking of her, and that she is often fed with the hidden manna; often blessed in her faith, and love, and dedication; that in her watching unto prayer, and her looking to the Saviour, she is made riehly to partake of the consolations of the gospel.

Respecting the Quarterly Meeting at London Grove, he remarks:—

I trust I shall not soon forget that opportunity: it was, through holy help, a time of much more relief and encouragement than most I have known sinee I left Baltimore. I was largely engaged; and I hope that those whose judgment I have most valued were not burthened. I trust that there is a body of sound, valuable friends in that Quarterly Meeting. Whilst among them, I could not but recur to feelings with which I had been comforted before I left home, respecting some parts of Pennsylvania. In point of size, I thought it as large as, or perhaps a little larger than, York Quarterly Meeting; and I do not suppose that any friend had more than sixteen or eighteen miles to travel to attend it. Some of their meetings are large; at London Grove perhaps 100 families. In some parts of Chester county, the land, for many miles square, is very much occupied by Friends, and well cultivated; and in many instances they are living in ease and plenty.

He now had a few meetings in the small adjoining state of Delaware, where slavery was still allowed. Of a meeting for the negroes, he writes:

3rd mo. 4th. Little Creek.—In the meeting this afternoon with the dear coloured people,—there might be 100, mostly blacks; many of them decent, and of really respectable appearanee. Their deportment was orderly and serious. I

laboured among them under a good feeling of love and deep interest in their present and everlasting welfare. I trust that to some "I was as without law to them that were without law." In others there seemed a capacity to receive the blessed gospel with the understanding, as well as feeling; and I could not but believe there were a few really grown in the spiritual life,—solid, established Christians, and, as I have since heard, of circumspect, consistent conduct. I had a precious feeling of near unity with these; and I trust that near the close much of the power of divine love was to be felt amongst us. I was brought under the spirit of prayer. Many of the dear people were tender and affectionate, and it was pleasant to me to part from them in such sweet feeling. There were no slaves among them, and there are very few in the neighbourhood.

Bending his course down to the eastern shore of Maryland, he visited Friends in those early settlements, and makes the following record:—

17th. Talbot County, Eastern Shore of Maryland, three miles from Bayside Meeting-house.—It is thought to have been the coldest winter that has been known in America for the last twenty years. After the breaking up of the frost, we had several days of very cold wet weather. Within the last fortnight it has been fine and remarkably pleasant. The frogs in the swamps, awakened from their long winter sleep, had begun by their chirping song to announce the near approach of spring; and the peach orchards, and the weeping willow, which is a common and very ornamental tree in this country, seem just ready to put forth. Yesterday was almost oppressively warm; early in the evening, on our return from Choptank to Easton, we were overtaken by a thunderstorm, which continued three or four hours. It would not be easy to give an accurate idea of the awfulness of a tempest in America. The lightning may often be seen running down like a perpendicular stream. One cannot travel far without seeing trees which bear the marks of having been struck by it. About

eight last evening, after the storm had appeared to subside, there was the loudest explosion just over our heads that I had ever heard; it seemed to shake the house with great violence. I felt as if I had received a blow on the back of my head. As we came along to-day, within half a mile of the town, we saw a large oak tree shivered in a wonderful manner, some of the limbs thrown to a great distance. By the terms in which friends expressed themselves, I supposed they had seldom seen such a spectacle. After the tempest, the weather soon became very cold. In the morning there was a keen north-wester. The coldest winds in this part of the Continent are from that quarter. Yesterday afternoon the thermometer was at 79 deg.; and this morning at eight, in the same situation, it stood at 27 deg.

Some of these meetings are considered to be among the first established on the Continent. Friends at the beginning mostly made their landing from some of the waters of the Chesapeake, and in their early travels along the coast, it was often crossed through many perils. It is a little humbling to me to think how different is my present lot, with my comfortable waggon and handsome pair of horses, rolling along the finest of roads. But perhaps in those days the back was better fitted for the burden than we might suppose. They were many of them of strong constitutions, accustomed to riding, of rough habits at home, and inured to difficulties in their travels in our own country; so that I sometimes think that in these things the ways of Providence are, perhaps, more equal than we may at all times be ready to believe.

The deep interest he took in the spiritual prosperity of those among whom he laboured so faithfully in the Gospel, kept his attention alive to everything calculated to promote it. Thus he writes on the

18th.—I have long wished to have accomplished, in accordance with Friends' principles, a selection of critical, historical and geographical notes on the books of Holy Scripture; and

particularly to keep in view the defending, against the attacks of Unitarians and unbelievers, those passages which point at the divinity of our Lord. I know that my abilities are very incompetent to such a work; but if ever I settle down again to quiet domestic life, nothing would, I believe, be more to my satisfaction, than to contribute in ever so small a degree to an undertaking which, under the Divine blessing, might be rendered so important to the preservation of many of our young people, and to the profitable information of some more advanced in life. We should ever remember that a literal understanding of the original design of Scripture need not in any wise interfere with its spiritual application, under Divine influence. The work is so great, and the object of such vast importance, that it may take many years, and employ the talents of many men to accomplish it. Lightly as some might be disposed to treat it, I have sometimes thought that the concern is not the fruit of my own imagination. I trust it has its origin in a deep-felt desire for the sound religious establishment of all my dear friends on the basis of Christian truth, and to promote an increasing attachment to the blessed cause of the gospel of our Lord.

23rd.—This day I enter my thirty-eighth year; it has made me feel low, on many accounts, to think of it. I cannot suppose there are many more years in reserve. I expect that I shall soon begin to feel the breaking up of the outer man. But my mind is not bereft of hope and confidence, that the great work will be finished in the day time, and that at last the end will be peace.

The Friends among whom he had lately been travelling, at that time formed part of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; and, after attending their Quarterly Meeting, he observes:—

At the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders for the Southern quarter of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, held in Maryland, I thought I had authority to say a few words for

the encouragement of sincere but feeble-hearted believers. The next day, in the meeting for discipline, I ventured to take more part than in most meetings of the kind since I left home; and particularly was engaged, in much tenderness of spirit, to submit to the consideration of Friends the propriety of pleading with their Legislature respecting the people of colour still held in slavery in that State. It is slavery in its mildest form, but still it does exist; and, could they be brought to adopt measures for its abolition, it would be so much ground gained, on the side of humanity, for the whole Union. There was another meeting for worship next day, attended by many of their neighbours. After some discouragement, I ventured, and was strengthened in the love and power of the Gospel, to speak for the comfort of the awakened and sincere inquirers, and to plead with those who were still afar off. We went home with a friend living very near the shores of the Delaware bay—a rich, but flat and unhealthy country. The description they gave us of the swarms of musquitoes with which they are liable to be annoyed, reminded me of Pharoah's plague of the flies. After warm rains in the summer, they rise out of the marshes with the appearance of a large dense cloud darkening the air. The poor cattle are great sufferers, sometimes so entirely covered that it would be difficult to tell the colour of their skin. The whole of this peninsula is low and flat, but, except on the margin of the creeks, well wooded. The farms bear the appearance of a long-settled country; but in their state of agrieulture they are much behind Pennsylvania and New York. The country is so much intersected by navigable creeks from the Delaware and Chesapeake, that they say there is not a farmer but has water carriage within four or five miles of his own door.

Very early in the Fourth Month, William Forster reached Wilmington. There he believed it to be required of him to visit Friends in their families.

Wilmington, 4th mo. 3rd.—We came here yesterday afternoon in time for meeting, at the close of which I requested a

few friends to stop, to whom I expressed my feeling towards the Friends of this place. I was not brought to submit to this detention without much deep thoughtfulness. Having borne the burthen for several weeks, and believing I should not feel clear without casting myself on their judgment, I made the surrender.

Through the power and love of our gracious Redeemer, I was brought into an unusually submissive state of mind on my first going out this morning. I think I have hardly felt more entirely given up to the service of the Gospel on any occasion since my coming into America; this was a great alleviation of the trial, and much encouragement to me to persevere. In a few of the visits, I thought there was a sweet feeling of openness, and some capacity afforded me to minister to those for whom I felt myself exercised.

I find the number of families in this meeting larger than I expected; perhaps there may be about one hundred and thirty visits.

8th.—Thus far I have sat all their meetings in silence. I wish to be resigned and fully given up to the Lord in all things, whether to speak or to be silent: it is good to be content with an appointed portion. Mine is often one of much suffering in spirit. Many are the floating speculations by which the people are carried to and fro: these are trials under which the Lord's servants must suffer, and for which they must often deeply mourn.

After the conclusion of his labour of love in Wilmington, he went to Philadelphia to attend the Yearly Meeting there. A lively sense of the "preciousness of Christ" made him very quick-sighted to every appearance of disaffection towards the Saviour's person and cause, whether openly manifested or secretly working to "overthrow the faith of some."

Never did I know a day in which it was more necessary, at least for me, to seek for strength strictly to attend to the

Divine injunction, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." I have been very much shut up as to public ministry since I came to this city, and for several days previously. If I can but feel that I am really in my great Master's hands, I desire no more. I wish to be kept contented in my lowly lot, and to appear as stripped, as weak, as foolish as He may see meet for me. On the other hand, it is, I trust, sincerely my desire that I may be preserved from undue discouragement,—that the fear of man, with which in moments of weakness my mind is sorely oppressed, may not prevail. In such times of trial may I ever beware that I do not shut up myself in my own will, and seek to be hidden when I am really called forth to give proof on whose side I am, and whom it is that I desire to serve.

From Philadelphia, soon after the close of the Yearly Meeting, he went into the State of New Jersey, and attended several meetings there. On the 28th of Fourth Month, he writes:—

The Lord is very gracious to me; sometimes, by the word of his Omnipotence, He is pleased to rebuke the winds and the waves, and, under the feeling of inward calm, I am enabled to offer up myself in obedience to his will, and to commit those near unto me as my own flesh to his care and protection. May He have you all in his holy keeping.

The remote parts of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Muncy and Elklands, now attracted William Forster's attention, and he took his journey westward, over the mountains.

5th mo. 16th. Near the Falls of the Schuylkill.—Wide indeed does this extended continent appear to me, now that I am setting my face towards the western wilderness. In my most deeply-waiting moments I think I have been satisfied that the call is clear, and that it is the path of duty; and that I cannot look for divine support and protection, but as

I seek to be devoted to the Lord, and in all things resigned to his disposal. There is comfort in the conviction that the weakness of our nature is fully known to God,—that his eye is in every place,—that He is Almighty, and that, so far as He shall see it conducive to the furtherance of the gracious purposes of his love in our sanctification, he will either spare us outward trials and inward distress, or mercifully reveal his arm in time of conflict for support and consolation. These are considerations which help to bear me up.

29th. At Mercy Ellis's, 150 miles N. W. of Philadelphia.—I am increasingly impressed with the conviction that every right exercise in the Lord's cause is serious and important, both as it relates to ourselves and others. I think I sometimes feel the weight of meetings immediately impending more than I did ten years ago: indeed I often feel myself more of a novice than in the days of my very early beginning.

Since I left Philadelphia, I have been favoured with the enjoyment of a quiet and contented mind, and more fully devoted in obedience to my great Lord and Master than I have been able to feel at some other times. Many must be my trials; but I know that it is possible, in the loving kindness of our Lord, that strength and peace may be made to abound far beyond all my perils and privations.

6th mo. 1st.—We had a long fatiguing journey yesterday from Muncy to this place, Elklands; I believe not less than thirty miles. Our road was over one of the principal ridges of the Alleghany, in places very steep. We forded the Loyalsock without difficulty, the waters being low; here it is only called a creek, with us it would pass for a good sized river. We came along very rough roads, if indeed we could say we had any roads at all. The latter part of the way was very hilly, and, where the hemlocks and pines stand thick, in some places it is soft and deep. A thunder-storm came on in the afternoon; the lightning was very vivid, and altogether, in the midst of dark woods and high mountains, it was as awful and grand as can well be conceived. From our first entering the woods, I think we did not pass through more

than four or five settlements; so that it was with no small degree of pleasure, and, perhaps with most of us, with some feeling of real gratitude, that we hailed the first breaking in of light through the woods, denoting our near approach to the habitation of our friends. They kindly welcomed us, and we soon had a blazing fire, and no lack of good things for supper.

This is not a very new settlement; but the roads being so bad, the mountains steep, and the timber heavy, it is not much improved. There are perhaps five or six families that comprise the meeting. Several attended besides their own members. Mercy Ellis had, I thought, a bright time. I had been laid very low; but, lifted up for a time out of my depression, I was made to rejoice in my Saviour, and, enlarged in divine love, was strengthened to speak of his salvation.

I cannot but be satisfied that we came; though we heard enough to discourage a stronger heart than mine, and truly the difficulties are neither very few nor light. It is remarkable that people can be found to settle among the mountains; but some seem to like to take the part of pioneers. They tell rather wonderful stories of wolves, bears, and panthers, but we have seen nothing to alarm us: rattlesnakes are said to abound in many places, but we have not seen them. The backwoods people are mostly hunters, at least at their first breaking into uninhabited countries. Deer will pay them for the fatigues of the chase; and here there are, or rather have been, large herds of elk. White pine (our Weymouth pine), yellow pine (Scotch fir), hemlock, spruce, sugar maple, beech, and some ash, are all very large, and of a prodigious size. Some of the hemlocks are at least 150 feet in height, and we saw white pine of nearly 200 feet. Could I devote sufficient time to it, I could gather a fine collection of plants; the variety that I meet with is very interesting. The azalea is now in bloom, and gives a remarkably cheerful cast to the woodland scenery. The rhododendron is in great abundance on the banks of the streams; but not yet in flower. Almost

the only article on which our friends have to depend for a little ready money is the manufacture of maple sugar.

From these remote parts William Forster travelled "early and late, over rough roads, with but little time for rest or retirement," to visit a few meetings of Friends in the heart of Pennsylvania, at Bellefonte, and some neighbouring places. In coming down from these districts he was again confined by illness. A sharp attack of fever and ague, under which he suffered much from sickness and pain, detained him more than two weeks at an hotel at Bedford. With reference to what he passed through during this trial he remarks:—

I am increasingly brought to see that my peace and strength very materially depend upon my cherishing a state of quiet, unmurmuring, unreserved, and, if it might be, uninquiring resignation to the Divine will.

6th mo. 26th.—I long to be in the harness again, serving my gracious Lord in the work of his gospel. I would hope that this trial may have the effect of quickening my dedication, and driving me deeper in spirit, in patient waiting upon the Lord, for the most gentle intimations of his holy will. Within the last day or two I have felt such powerful attractions towards Friends in those parts upon which I am, I trust, about to enter, as fully to satisfy me that there would be no peace or safety in retreat. I am quite earnest for our getting among Friends in the Red-stone settlement; though when we get there, as at many other times, I may be ready to wonder what has brought me.

28th.—I was at the week-day meeting at Dunning's-creek to-day, about ten miles distant, in which I was engaged in ministry, almost to the extent of my bodily strength. It was not a time of much sensible dominion in the power of God. In the afternoon, we had a serious, I trust a solemn,

opportunity with our friends before we parted from them, and a pleasant ride back to Bedford.

I was disappointed in finding the doctor decided in his disapprobation of my attempting to travel at present; yet I am supported in much calmness, and animated by a cheering, lively hope, that the day of our enlargement will soon arrive. This sweet feeling I accept as an evidence that we are not forsaken, and that we have not been misled in concluding to come here; and perhaps I must have a meeting with the people. If it be really laid upon me, I hope I shall not prove rebellious, though at present I cannot but regard it, and all such engagements, as very formidable. Places are generally easy to be obtained, and the people are often willing to come, and most friends that travel are much in the way of having them collected; but that does not lighten the burthen to me.

7th mo. 2nd.—I went to the meeting in the Court-house, which was well attended; and though my bodily ability was not equal to great exertion, I was considerably engaged, and afterwards felt peaceful, and abounding in thanksgiving.

3rd.—We came away about noon, and are at a comfortable hotel about eleven miles from Bedford. Our landlord seems living like a prince, or rather an ancient patriarch; fine flocks and herds, and fields and orchards, making a most promising and flourishing appearance. With his estate of between 800 and 900 acres of rich bottom land, he might pass for a first-rate yeoman in England.

4th. Smithfield.—I feel not without hope that as I endeavour to abide watchful and devoted, our gracious Lord will so open my path in the light of his heavenly wisdom as that I shall find a way prepared before me. A few days ago, looking forward to these western parts, I thought I could lay hold on the word of promise to some degree of comfort,—"Behold I set before thee an open door which no man shall be able to shut;" but now it is very much taken from me, and I feel low in regard to the sensible influence of that light and love in which all true ministry must have its origin. But though hard and dead as the stones of the street, I know there is a

Power who, with a word, in an instant of time, can impart wisdom and strength, and give authority to the very meanest servants—to such as may be brought to look upon themselves as the weak, and base, and foolish things of this world—to speak in his name; and, whilst they speak, to baptize. Let my sufferings, my humiliations and tribulations be what they may, if the Lord be pleased to sanctify my trials so as to prepare me in the very smallest measure—and however small it matters not—thus to approve myself a true servant of Christ, in the life and power of the Holy Spirit, I trust I shall be content. I neither ask nor desire more.

Many are my fears lest I should be beguiled by that enemy who works deceitfully in a mystery, to utter words without power; lest, in the aetivity of my own imagination, in my own will, and in the remembrance of former openings, I should attempt to preach Christ and his salvation in the oldness of the letter, rather than in the newness of the Spirit. For I am increasingly convinced that it is nothing but the immediate influences of his love attending the instrumentality of his servants, that can be availing, either to the honour of his name, or the directing or gathering of the minds of the people to Him,—the ensign which is lifted up to the nations, for their redemption and recovery. I lately had a very bright opening, I think I may say an encouraging and animating prospect, whilst meditating upon those words of the prophet,—"And they that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." The hope was raised that even as it relates to our Society, as well as to the Church more at large, He is bringing, and will bring, as from the uttermost parts of the earth, those that shall build in that temple, which is to be a house of prayer to all nations; in the midst of which He will dwell, and over which He will rule and reign in His own eternal power. That He may prosper this work upon the earth, and hasten the coming of these glorious days, is increasingly the fervent and frequent travail of my soul.

In the course of the following two or three weeks,

William Forster had another attack of illness, similar to the former one, and his strength was greatly reduced. Before he had fully recovered, he visited the meetings within the limits of Redstone Quarterly Meeting, in the western parts of Pennsylvania. Of one of these meetings he says :—

I thought it an opportunity of divine favour, and one of those seasons of the abounding of heavenly mercy and love, in and through Christ Jesus our Lord, worthy to be held in grateful remembrance. I felt near access to the throne of grace, under the influence of a holy solemnity.

He writes of a meeting in the Court-house at Union :—

29th.—The meeting was very small; I was laid low in deep abasedness of spirit; and afterwards, I trust in the love and power of Christ, I was enabled to speak largely of that salvation by which Almighty God would reconcile unto himself his transgressing, benighted, and corrupted children. I was much exhausted, and glad to seek a quiet corner for the rest of both body and mind. I trust I was reverently thankful for the grace renewedly and so unexpectedly vouchsafed. Though oppressed with heat, I feel stronger this morning. I am still feeble; but, whilst I can keep clear of disease, and pursue my course, however slowly, I hope to be preserved in contentment, and to seek, with increased dedication, to be given up to the Lord. And if trial should be renewed, my mind is stayed in humble, hopeful confidence that I shall be supported in meek and submissive resignation to the divine will; so that, if I do nothing towards the exaltation of the blessed cause of Christian redemption, I hope, through the mercy and power of the Lord, to be preserved from bringing dishonour upon that holy name of which I have made high profession.

8th mo. 2nd. Brownsville.—Our meeting was at Muddycreek,

on Second-day afternoon. The house was very full and oppressively warm. I was under much discouragement, and a little tossed in spirit; but, believing that, in the aboundings of divine love, the spring of life was opened for the refreshment of some weary travellers, and in apprehension that the Lord was seeking to gather, to heal, and to strengthen, I was much enlarged, and laboured faithfully, according to my measure, in the gospel of Christ. At the close of the meeting my soul was lifted up in humble, fervent gratitude to God; and, in the feeling renewedly vouchsafed of his eternal love and power in and through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, I became more content under the many trials attendant upon my present path, and in true quietness of mind was enabled to offer up myself in resignation to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

3rd. Near Westland Meeting-house.—I went to the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders; and, notwithstanding my deep depression, I thought that, in the tender mercy of the Most High, access was granted to the well of living waters. Cherishing the impression made upon my mind, I was enlarged in exercise for the encouragement of such as were cast down, buffeted, and afflicted, particularly that such as have been brought under the cross of Christ might patiently endure every humiliation through which the Lord may see meet to lead them, in preparing them for future usefulness.

In the afternoon we attended a Committee of men and women Friends, who may be considered as a branch of a Committee appointed by the last Yearly Meeting, principally for the purpose of lending assistance to the free coloured people in bettering their outward condition, by promoting the education of their children, and aiding them in their agricultural pursuits, &c. Friends seemed alive to a good concern, and evinced much warmth of feeling. I feel so deeply on every point affecting the poor slaves and free coloured people (for a very large proportion of them are not black), and all that relates to Africa and the West Indies, that, were I at liberty to give myself up to the cause to the extent of my feelings, it might be in danger of almost swallowing up the

whole man. The field is large, almost beyond conception; and the labourers comparatively very few; but I have great comfort in believing that the work will go on and prosper,—that righteousness will ultimately prevail, until this degraded portion of our fellow-creatures are established in the possession and enjoyment of every civil and religious privilege.

He was now about to leave Pennsylvania and to pass on into the State of Ohio.

Pittsburgh.—Here we are at last, on the 5th of the Eighth Month, instead of the 15th of the Sixth Month, which was laid out for us by our friends before we left the neighbourhood of Philadelphia; but I do not, I dare not, I cannot murmur. My sufferings have been many and deep, only known to Him whose hand has been laid heavily upon me; yet I can humbly and reverently bless his holy name, for the multitude of those mercies with which He has encompassed my path; and most earnestly do I desire that it may please the Lord so to sanctify all these things to my good, that under his blessing they may tend to my purification and deeply-rooted establishment in Christ. Though at times much discouraged about my health, I am not entirely bereft of confidence that, in his great love and mercy, He will at last bring me safely to the end of these trials.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

TRAVELS IN OHIO, INDIANA, ETC.

With the concurrence of other Yearly Meetings it had been concluded by Ohio Yearly Meeting, the year before, to allow five of its Quarterly Meetings to form themselves into a distinct Yearly Meeting, "for the States of Indiana, Illinois, and the western parts of Ohio;" and, although the first "Yearly Meeting of Indiana" was not opened till the 8th of Tenth Month of the current year, yet the Friends constituting it no longer formed part of Ohio Yearly Meeting, about to be held at the usual time at Mount Pleasant. To that Yearly Meeting, thus reduced in numbers, William Forster now bent his course, holding several meetings as he went. In passing along he was, in these parts also, frequently pained in noticing the sad effects which the departure from sound Christian views, alluded to before, was producing on many minds. In reference to this he writes:—

1821. *8th mo. 22nd.*—I want Friends to stand firmly by that most noble and excellent institution, the Bible Society. I am far from feeling my interest abated in its concerns, and want to hear that our dear friends all over England maintain their attachment to the Society, and its truly Christian object; and that, in the intercourse with serious people of other Societies to which it necessarily leads, they are preserved watchful and faithful in a consistent support of our peculiar testimonies. The trial is not light, to hear it and its

objects and proceedings called in question; and to bear it with meekness and quietness requires no small degree of Christian humility. I have sometimes endeavoured to explain the object, and to plead for the general circulation of Holy Scripture through its means.

Could I find that the volume of Divine inspiration was held in sufficient estimation by the members of our own Society, and that they trained up their children and families in the reading of the Bible, I believe I should be content. It is affecting to me to believe that many of these zealous ones regard English Friends with a jealous eye for the part they take in this and other good works.

25th.—The Yearly Meeting wears a formidable aspect; but my mind is preserved in a quiet, hopeful state, and I am not without some feeling of supporting confidence, that much as I may be plunged into a sense of my helplessness and unworthiness, and many as may be my depressions, if it please the Lord to open my way into any little service, I shall be strengthened for the work of the day.

From Mount Pleasant he went to the Still Water and Muskingum settlements of Friends.

Barnesville, 9th mo. 17th.—Since the Yearly Meeting, besides attending some particular meetings, we have been at six Monthly Meetings in succession, some of them very large. My exercises have been deep and very heavy; it is but seldom that I have had to speak in the words of a pleasant song, or to rejoice in the love and power of the gospel. Almost in every place I have to make war against a formal, superficial and traditional religion, to seek to convince the people they have need of a Saviour, and to preach the Lord Jesus Christ as the only salvation provided for poor lost, fallen man.

My companion (John Paul, a Friend in the station of Elder, from Philadelphia) tries to cheer me up in hope that all is not lost—that here and there a few of the scattered grains find their way to a well-prepared soil, and that,

perhaps, fruit may sometimes be produced to the praise of the great Husbandman. But I scarcely dare to hope, either for others or myself; all I desire is light and strength adequate to the work of the day, and in resignation to leave all the effect of my little labours to the Lord.

Pursuing his labours among Friends in Ohio during the Tenth Month, he remarks:—

How some of my dear friends would smile to see the parcels of little spelling and picture books which are stowed in the black leather bag. It has been affecting to me to find the poor children so much neglected in their learning, that I thought I would bring plenty of such little books with me; which perhaps may be an inducement to the elder children to teach the younger. What a pleasure it is to me, even in such trifles, to contribute to the gratification of the dear little creatures; for in these remote situations they have little of the kind for their entertainment. Money in these parts is so scarce that there are not many Friends who would think they could spare even a few cents for the purchase of a child's book. There is a school-house attached to almost every meeting; but in many places, in consequence of the difficulty of the times, they have no master. I find that First-day schools have been attempted in almost every meeting within the compass of some of the Monthly Meetings; but in many instances I fear they have not been judiciously conducted; boys and girls, and young men and young women, all assemble together, and go home in companies through the woods in the evening. I endeavour to do what I can to induce Friends to believe that, under proper regulations, and the superintendence of steady and watchful friends, they might be held to great advantage, and that it would afford the opportunity of a little learning to some poor children who can hardly be expected to obtain it in any other way. Such schools would have the great advantage of providing suitable employ for young people on First-day afternoons, instead of their rambling about the woods, or spending their

time in gossipping and idle visiting; and it might have the happy effect of bringing the young people into habits of order and quietness. Oh! what a field is here for enlightened and well-concerned Friends. The members of our Society are more numerous than I expected to find them. In some places it seems as if the whole of the settlement were in profession with them, so that they have the opportunity of adopting and enforcing regulations to a degree that would be impracticable with us.

I have had printed at Mount Pleasant 1,000 copies of three of the sections in the Book of Advices issued by our Yearly Meeting, viz.:—"Advice to Parents," "Recommendation to the Reading of the Scriptures," and "Advice to Young People." It so fully comprehends much that I have at heart, and which I am desirous as much as possible may be impressed on the minds of Friends, that I feel thankful to my dear friends for having placed me in circumstances to attend to this little act of duty.

Marietta, 28th.—Yesterday was a lovely day, and much of the way we had fine hard roads; sometimes miles through the woods without the least appearance of cultivation. It was near sunset before we reached the end of our journey. Descending a steep hill down to the west bank of the Muskingum, we caught a view of the town; and, the Ohio and Muskingum both opening upon us at the same moment, I think it formed one of the finest landscapes I have seen in America. Several of the best of the houses, placed at a considerable distance from the rivers on rising ground, exhibited the appearance of neatness and real elegance not very common in this country. But, as in most other places, they will not bear a very close inspection. There are good brick and framed houses; the latter handsomely painted, but some of them only half-finished, the windows broken, and, in several of the towns and villages in this part of the country, in a dilapidated condition—a standing testimony to the change of the times. The exterior of our inn promised us handsome entertainment, but it was far from answering our expectation. Determined that our meeting should not suffer for

want of invitation, I was up early, and took quite a long circuit.

On going to the Court-house we found a pretty many people assembled. They were very quiet, and continued coming in till at last the place was well-filled. After some exercise of their patience, I was much enlarged in expression and in feeling also, and a door of utterance was set open for me beyond what I have often known. I spoke much of Christ as our Saviour, and was enabled—for I trust it was not of myself—to bear testimony to Him as the sacrifice for sin, and the means of reconciliation with the Father. I also spoke fully on the spirituality of our holy religion, and the fruits it is designed to produce on the earth. And when I rose a second time, merely, as I thought, to take leave of the people, I was led to drop some hints on the nature of Divine worship, on silent waiting in meetings, and on the exercise and true legitimate object of all rightly authorized gospel ministry. Most of these things seemed new and strange to the people; we could not find that any Friends' meeting had been held there before.

Crossing over to the western side of the State, William Forster entered the limits of the newly-formed Yearly Meeting of Indiana, which had been held for the first time about a month before, at Richmond.* While at Salem, Champaign Co., Ohio, he writes:—

Our kind host's history is a good specimen of the migratory life of some of our western Friends. He tells us that he cleared three or four different settlements in the woods in North Carolina, and twenty-four years ago he came and settled on the right bank of the Ohio, opposite the Kenawha river, when there was but one family of Friends in what is now the State of Ohio. He stayed there six years; then

* For a statement regarding the greatly altered condition of the Meetings of Friends in these districts, see the note in the next chapter.

settled at Fairfield, between the Scioto and Little Miami, and since that has moved two or three times, and cleared a part, if not the whole, of as many farms. He is now talking of moving to a country of which we have lately heard a high character, and which it is said is now settling very fast,—on the Sangamo, a small river tributary to the Illinois. It may be truly said these rolling stones gather but little moss. In some instances they may increase their possessions by clearing and selling, and moving; but, living always on the frontier, they become so much accustomed to the rough and uncivilized habits of a woodland life, that they have hardly the understanding, and are far from the enjoyment of, any other. I am almost convinced that, much as they may judge their eastern neighbours for pride and indulgence, they are very far from having attained to that experience in the life and power of godliness which, from their appearance, one would wish to believe they possess. Could our friends be prevailed on to stay where they are, suffer the civilized world to gather round them, and accept the benefits of education and improved society, one would have some hope for them.

A little more to the south he visited a large cluster of meetings :—

11th mo. 10th. Clear Creek, Warren County.—We came to Waynesville, after a small meeting at Plum-grove. I thought it best to make a push, and get to Waynesville that evening; and it was well we did so, as next morning there was a most violent storm. I suppose that through the country we had travelled it was really terrific. Some of the friends, who came at the peril of their lives, said they had never seen so many trees fall in the same space of time. Travelling through the woods in a high wind is dangerous. The trees decay much sooner than further to the eastward, and, from the nature of the soil, and their growing so close together, the roots appear disproportioned to the height and bulk of the trees, so that they are liable to be thrown down with but slight gusts of wind; and one tree falling will often occasion the falling or

breaking of five or six others. Thus far we have been preserved from exposure to these storms; and we must hope in the merciful, watchful Providence who has thus far protected us, and seek to commit ourselves to the Lord for preservation through all the remaining perils of our wilderness journey.

The Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders on Sixth-day was unusually small; it was not a time of much abounding with me, but I ventured in fear to give a hint or two on the blessedness of a meek and patient spirit under suffering, and to encourage Friends to watchfulness in their exercises, lest they should not make clear distinction between the warmth of creaturely zeal, and the blessed influences of Divine love, in which the true disciple is endued with that charity which hopeth, believeth, and endureth all things.

The meetings yesterday were very large; they were seasons of deep feeling. The meeting for discipline held late; there are eight Monthly Meetings—Cincinnati, Waynesville, Springfield, Center, Cæsar's Creek, Green Plains, Alum Creek, and Darby Creek.

From these parts of Ohio, William Forster passed into the southern portion of the State of Indiana, and was for several months closely engaged among Friends in those newly settled districts. Many were his privations in what was then truly a wilderness country. But with all his love of refinement, and the domestic comforts he had been accustomed to at home, the personal inconveniences to which he was exposed were little in his estimation compared with the grief he felt in observing that in many instances which came under his notice a very low appreciation of the blessed truths of the Gospel, amounting in some cases to a rejection of them, sorrowfully prevailed.

11th mo. 29th. At Lewis's Tavern, Shelby Raven, Indiana. —This backwoods tavern consists of two log-houses, with a

covered passage between them; each perhaps from fifteen to twenty feet square; the largest is our landlord's dwelling-house for himself, his wife, and six children. How they dispose of several other members of their family it is difficult to imagine. The apartment which we inhabit just holds four beds; one of them is allotted to John and me; our companion and four other travellers will, I suppose, divide the other three between them. It is a most thoroughly disagreeable way of life. Our worthy host is a man of good understanding and established respectability, from Carolina. We were at their meeting yesterday, to which I found they had invited several of their neighbours. After a time of deep indwelling before the Lord, I was enlarged in consolation and invitation and counsel, to my own confirmation. I suppose the meeting does not consist of less than sixty or seventy families. We have now a long and formidable journey in prospect, forty-six miles to Vincennes.

30th. Washington, Davies County.—Instead of the crowded cabin and noisy family of last night, we have a snug chamber to ourselves, a nice glowing hearth, and a neat chamber. We came eight miles to a late breakfast in Hindostan, a newly begun town of about twenty houses. Our road, so far, like that we travelled yesterday, was hilly, and the country but thinly inhabited. We ferried the river, which we were told is 400 yards in width; and, after ascending a hill, had a fine level road through a country comparatively open, and in some places wholly clear of large timber. We found the settlements much more numerous, and at intervals finely cultivated farms.

12th mo. 2nd. Vincennes.—We did not see our host till this morning. Poor man! his history touched me; his wife died about four years ago, and has left him with ten children. Proprietor of 800 acres of land in that fine country, some of his children are covered with rags just hung over their shoulders, forming a spectacle that would have excited our compassion for the children of the poorest beggar at our door.

There is a great deal of travelling on the road. Some going out to Illinois and Missouri; and nearly as many

returning to their former residences, discouraged by sickness, or disappointed in not finding the Elysium they had been seeking.

We appointed a meeting for the evening at the Court-house. On going to it, we found a considerable number of people assembled, who appeared very unsettled. I strove to be quiet, and, a small opening to service presenting, I rose with the tide, and was borne along on a gentle current of heavenly love, speaking of Christ and his salvation, warning and inviting the people, and, comforting the oppressed and penitent sinner with the hope of mercy and deliverance. I was afterwards engaged in prayer and intercession for the sincere and seeking believers, for the worldly and carnally minded, and the negligent and indifferent, and for the people at large in this place, that they might be turned from their iniquity, and seek to serve and fear the Lord.

The town is not so large, nor the houses so good, as some we have seen in the Western country. It was originally built and settled by a colony of French emigrants from Canada, above 100 years ago; and was, I suppose, one of the principal outposts on this side the mountains for trading with the Indians. Latterly a number of Americans settled in among them; they have no place for worship but a Popish chapel; but the Methodists and Presbyterians occasionally use the Court-house for their meetings. The town stands on a large flat or sandy plain, which appears by nature uncongenial to the growth of timber.

Than William Forster, the oppressed sons of Africa could not well have a truer or a steadier friend. It is only in keeping with himself, that here, on the borders of two Free States, his Christian indignation is roused by what he heard of "kidnapping," and he adds:—

I am sorry to say there are many slaves in the town—I suppose mostly such as were held under the territorial government; but the State Legislature has made provision for

their freedom. We hear sad stories of kidnapping. I wish some active benevolent people could induce every person of colour to remove away from the river, as it gives wicked, unprincipled wretches the opportunity to get them into a boat, and carry them off to Orleans or Missouri, where they still fetch a high price. I have been pleading hard with a black man and his wife to get off for some settlement of Friends, with their five children; and I hope they will go. I hardly know of anything that would make me more desperate than to be in the way of this abominable system of kidnapping; I cannot say, when once set on to rescue a poor creature, where I should stop. It is most shocking to think that they will betray one another, and sometimes the black women are the deepest in these schemes. A poor man told us that he never went to bed without having his arms in readiness for defence.

5th. Harmony, Posey County.—Believing I could not peacefully relinquish the prospect of visiting our friends to the west of the Wabash, we pursued our journey to the southward. Yesterday afternoon we had a meeting at the house of a widow Friend, in a little colony of emigrants from New York; some of them Friends, others more or less remotely connected with the Society.

After a wilderness journey, we arrived here just as the town clock struck five. This is an interesting village, a settlement of Germans who came into America upwards of sixteen years ago. They established themselves in the first instance on the waters of the Big Beaver, in Pennsylvania, and removed to this place about seven years ago. They have a fine estate of 25,000 acres—3,000 cleared and fenced, and from what we saw it was in a state of good cultivation. The village contains about 700 inhabitants; they appear an orderly, industrious, and sober people. There are some handsome brick dwellings and large wood houses in the village, a neat place of worship, and a commodious inn. It is difficult to form any correct opinion of a people on such very slight acquaintance, and especially such as speak a strange language; but it is not too much to say there is nothing prepossessing in their

appearance. It has to me more the appearance of a community devoted to temporal aggrandizement than to religious attainment. Their industry, neatness, and order, and especially their cleanliness, are great. It is difficult to ascertain their religious principles. They object to oaths and war, but are in the practice of paying a fine in lieu of personal service; community of goods and implicit submission to their elder or headman are enjoined.

Having crossed over into the State of Illinois, he continues his narrative.

6th. Albion.—We were ferried over the Wabash, about a quarter of a mile in width, by a man and two boys. I pleased myself with giving each of the lads a New Testament, and the poor man appearing anxious to possess the same treasure, I did not hesitate to gratify him. The poor fellow, in the aboundings of his gratitude, offered to return the ferriage, which of course I did not accept. Our road was for the first few miles through a very extensive cane break. After traversing a more hospitable region, we came across two or three large prairies. Having been shut up in the woods for such a length of time, it was gratifying beyond description to enjoy the extent of prospect. We were heartily welcomed by the landlady at Albion, who turned out to be our cousin Morris Birkbeck's old servant.

7th.—We were stirring early, set out for Wanborough, and found our way without difficulty to Deborah Prichard's. I did not delay informing them of our views of a meeting with their little community. I went over to William Clark's; both he and his wife gave me a hearty welcome. In about an hour their little company was generally collected, consisting of D. P. and her four daughters, three or four of her sons, W. C. and his wife, and some of their children; and our cousins, P. H. and E. P. Our cousin Morris Birkbeck and his son were from home. My heart was made very tender, under a sense of the undeserved mercy and goodness of our Heavenly Father; and in that love which seeks to gather and to strengthen, I endeavoured to be

faithful to what I believed to be laid upon me. I trust there were some in whom the witness was reached. Afterwards I was engaged in thanksgiving, and fervent supplication and intercession for those present and absent; especially for such as had been beguiled by the secret devices of the wicked one, and for such as had been led captive at his will, that these might be rescued from the hands of the destroyer, as brands plucked from the burning. They appeared kind and affectionate, and I enjoyed more relief than I could have hoped for.

Keeping near the Wabash they pursued their journey in Illinois to the north.

We got off early in the afternoon, and came about sixteen miles, most of the way a very lonely road, through a large extent of prairie. There being no inn on the road, we found more than common difficulty in obtaining accommodation for the night, but at length succeeded better than we had hoped for. One of the young men had brought home a fine fat buck the day before, and we had nice broiled venison, both for supper and breakfast next morning. Our lodging was not quite so agreeable; my companion and I had a bed below stairs. In the same room was a poor woman, confined to her bed by sickness; our landlady was her companion for the night; another stranger slept on the floor, and our other friends up in the loft. The poor woman was very ill in the night, so that we had not a very comfortable time of rest. Being brought into feeling for the poor sick woman, I mentioned my wish to have the family collected, which was readily complied with; and I may confess with thankfulness that the opportunity was to my relief and comfort. With the hope of a quiet afternoon, and perhaps a meeting in the evening, we set off, intending to travel a stage of twelve miles. Instead of finding the distance to Laureneeville only twelve or fifteen miles, as we had been led to expect, from the time we spent on the road we concluded it could not be less than twenty-one or twenty-two miles. When we got there, though the town is laid out for a county-seat, we found it so much in its

infancy as to contain but one tavern, and that, with its rough exterior, affording but little hope of comfort. With the expectation of better fare farther on the road, we were easily induced to pursue our journey, intending to take up with such accommodation as we might meet with on the other side of the Embarras, which falls into the Wabash a few miles below Vincennes. We met with some detention at the ferry; but, by the help of a crazy boat, and lazy, awkward ferrymen, got safe over. Here we had the vexation to find we had not come forward for much better fare; everything was so completely miserable, that after a little refreshment, for which we had to wait long, we determined to go on a few miles, and trust to the hospitality of some of the neighhouring farmers for a night's lodging. We found our way by the light of the full moon, to the house of a kind-hearted man, from the State of New York, who without much hesitation agreed to give us shelter for the night. Though lately a magistrate, and holding a large tract of fine land, he had but a small cabin; he readily gave us one bed, and made up another for our companions, on the floor; and the man and his wife and six children divided the other two among themselves. This was not very agreeable, but much more tolerable among strangers, than in the company of old acquaintance. I pleased myself with distributing some of our little store of books among their fine family; and with the expression of hearty good-will on both sides we took our seats in the waggon, soon after sunrise, and reached the small town of Palestine, situated at the foot of La Motte Prairie, about mid-day. I took a short walk into the environs of the town: the scenery was novel and very striking; it had much the appearance of a large level common or green, of several miles in circumference, with settlements about every half-mile round the margin; and the adjacent woods, particularly towards the Wabash, contain large and very lofty timber, sycamore, hackberry, cotton-wood, &c.

Riding pretty nearly the length of this prairie, we came to another interval of wood, and then entered Union Prairie, and having a fine level road soon drove to the house of our friend Reuben Crow, eighty miles from Albion. After

another cold and very wakeful night, we parted from our friends at Union, our host kindly accompanying us to the Wabash. Before we set off, we had an opportunity of retirement in the family; I was much engaged both on account of the father and children, and under the prevalence of Divine love it was a season of instruction and consolation. When we reached the river, we found the ice, which I suppose had been formed in the night, floating in large sheets. It wore a fearful aspect; and the ferryman not having all his men at hand, to reconcile us to the detention of two or three hours, said quite enough to make me think it would be hazardous crossing; but, taking the opportunity when the river was clearer than it had been for some time previous, we got through with safety.

Having now re-entered the State of Indiana they pursued their course to a small settlement of Friends on the eastern banks of the Wabash.

After two or three hours' travelling, we met with a warm welcome from our friend Moses Hoggett, at his comfortable habitation on Honey Creek Prairie. Next day we had a meeting with Friends to some satisfaction and relief, and spent the afternoon and evening at the house of an agreeable, open-hearted friend on the banks of the Wabash. On Sixth-day, we had a bleak cold ride, about ten miles higher up the river, to Spring Creek.

We were guests to our friend Benjamin Bailey, and his worthy wife, who had not been previously visited by Friends. I think they did their very best to keep us warm; but, the cabin being without a window, we were obliged to have the door open for light, and the logs not being well plastered, it required some little watchfulness to suppress the rising of a murmur. We had a meeting with a few Friends in the neighbourhood in the evening, which, though not without some unpleasant interruption, was attended with sufficient feeling to satisfy us that we were pursuing the path of duty; and as there is a prospect of more Friends settling in the neighbourhood,

I trust it will not be long before they are encouraged to hold a meeting among themselves. We parted from the dear friends in much love, early in the forenoon, and drove briskly along a fine road to Terre Haute, a small town and county-seat recently erected on a high bluff on the left bank of the Wabash. I wished to have had a meeting there; but, finding there was not a suitable accommodation to be obtained, we came on without much delay to Moses Hoggett's. It was a fine clear winter's evening, and I took a pretty long walk on the prairie, to hunt for seeds. I met with many plants I had not seen before; and, had I been a few weeks earlier, I suppose I could have made a large collection of such as would have been very acceptable to many of my friends at home; however, I have gathered a few, which I intend to send to Philadelphia. These prairies would be a remarkably interesting field of research to some of our English botanists; and probably the time is not very distant when many of these plants will contribute much to the ornament of some of our gardens.

We were at meeting again with Friends at Honey Creek, on First-day morning, when I was unusually enlarged in exercise for their help and preservation.

About noon, we got to our friend Joshua Dick's, on Turman's Creek, and in the evening had a meeting, about one mile distant, at Abner Hunt's, where we lodged. It is quite a new settlement of Friends, from the upper part of North Carolina; perhaps there may be fifty individuals, and it is but lately they have begun to hold a meeting. I was given up to labour in word and doctrine, as the way might be opened for me; and I trust that to some it was an opportunity of instruction, and the renewing of strength; the day closed in peace. We had now visited Friends very generally on the Wabash; their number is not large, and certainly, as to that which constitutes the life and power of religion, the Society must be considered to be in a low state. There is no friend acknowledged as a minister among them; and I had to fear that the discipline is far from being supported in the authority of Truth, and that the attendance of meetings

for worship was regarded by many Friends with great indifference.

"Feeling released from an apprehension, by which he had been deeply exercised," that it might be required of him to extend his travels into the State of Missouri, he now proceeded to the "White River Settlement of Friends," in the south of Indiana.

On Third-day morning we parted from our kind friend Moses Hoggett; we found him a sensible, well-informed man, and an agreeable companion. He is much interested in the prosperity of their rising colony, and has been in the office of a Circuit or District Judge. We got to a tolerably comfortable inn that evening. The road being bad and slippery, we did not travel more than seventeen miles in the course of that day. We came to Carlisle next morning; and had hoped to have gone immediately to a small settlement of Friends, fifteen or twenty miles distant; but we were easily turned from our course, on hearing of the improbability of our being able to cross the river, as it was supposed to be frozen over, and yet not hard enough to bear our waggon. After some detention, we changed our course from east to north-east, and about three o'clock in the afternoon stopped at the cabin of very civil people, new settlers from Kentucky. It was well they did not turn us adrift, as we were twenty miles from the next house; and the weather being very cold, with a slight covering of snow on the ground, it would not have been the most pleasant night to have camped out for the first time. The people were very kind, and did their best; and we were too grateful for a shelter to murmur at accommodation to which we could hardly have submitted at the beginning of our Western tour. One of their children was very sick, and cried most piteously in the night. I endeavoured to think of something that might afford the poor child a little relief; and the parents were so thankful for a few articles of medicine that there was no making them take anything for our entertainment.

We had a pretty fair specimen of backwoods travelling the next day. The country was thinly wooded, undulating, and beautifully interspersed with prairies, and in some places the landscape was more picturesque than any I have seen, whilst entirely devoid of the aid of art. The prairies had much the appearance of large gentlemen's parks, with groups and groves of timber, situated as if planted to give the finest effect to the scenery. We stopped to bait about one o'clock, and made ourselves a fire in the woods for the first time. We enjoyed our dinner, but the country was too much frozen to afford us any water for ourselves or our horses. Early in the evening we reached the habitation of one of the most complete backwoodsmen we had met with in our travels. He had been brought up among Friends in Georgia. He was a bachelor, and had his widowed sister and her family living with him. Everything was rough in the extreme. I had some serious conversation with the poor man next morning, which I trust was well received. We then had five miles to the ferry, which we found had been kept open, and the water being low we were soon across, and travelling about six miles we reached the house of a Friend lately come into the woods. They showed us much kindness, and finding that if we pursued our journey more than two or three miles we could not get to any house that night, we were soon persuaded to stay and take up our quarters with them. It was a clean, agreeable, and well-ordered family; and, though we were crowded together within narrow limits, it was really more of a rest than we had met with for several days. We had an early breakfast next morning, and an opportunity of retirement with the family to some comfort. They had bought land in the woods, expecting other Friends would follow them, and that they should have a meeting; but, as in some other instances that we met with, had been disappointed, and talked of moving. Such instances are much calculated to excite one's sympathy. Industrious, upright Friends in low circumstances, spending no small portion of their little property, and two or three years of the best of their strength, in settling themselves in a new country, and then when they have got a

few acres of land under cultivation, and their buildings put up, have often to break up their establishment, and move again; but even that is far better than bringing up a family secluded from good society, and remote from meeting.

Early in the evening we reached the neighbourhood of Indian-creek, where our enjoyments were not superabundant. We had a very small meeting next day; possibly there might be one or two to whom it was an opportunity of encouragement, and I thought that in great mercy I was permitted some access to the Source of good for my own help. Parting from our friends in that settlement, I believe in true love, we came on four or five miles to the house of a man who readily gave us shelter for the night; and it was well we had not occasion to ask for more, as the family were bare of meat of any description, and were then living on hominy, with plenty of fat pork. This was almost the only family we met with that was not abounding in the necessaries and ordinary comforts of life. We took to our lodging on the floor with pretty good heart; the man and his wife and eight or nine children, and their son and his wife, occupying the beds slung round the room.

On reaching the White River district the narrative proceeds :—

After a journey through a hilly, broken country, we reached the habitation of a friend near White River meeting-house. They had but a small cabin, open and very cold; and, though they had begun a new house, capable of being made a comfortable habitation, in consequence of the sickness which had been general in that neigbourhood last fall, and with which they had been affected, they had made but little progress. Our meeting next day was to some comfort and relief. In the afternoon our friends kindly collected in a pretty strong party, and cut a way for us through the ice, about eight inches in thickness, so that we were ferried over the east branch of White River, perhaps 100 or 150 yards in width. Early next morning we found ourselves at the house of our friend, Joseph Farlow, near Lick-creek; a meeting

is lately settled just by his premises, of perhaps twenty-five families. We had a religious opportunity with them next forenoon, in which I was more enlarged than on some other occasions. That evening we visited a friend confined to the house in very great helplessness, and on Sixth-day had a meeting at a Friend's house on Lost River. It was small, and not to much relief; but not entirely in vain. On Seventh-day was the Monthly Meeting of Lick-creek, a large gathering of Friends. I ventured to speak on several subjects in the meeting for discipline. Friends showed us much love, and I trust there was a willingness at least to hear what was communicated. On First-day the meeting was large. I was poorly, and brought very low; but, in the riches of condescending mercy and goodness, was ultimately enlarged in much love. At the close was held their meeting for ministers and elders, which I attended, and in which I was not silent. On Second-day we had an agreeable ride through the woods to Mount Pleasant. On Third-day we were at a small and newly-settled meeting there.

It was late on Fourth-day when we reached the neighbourhood of Blue River Meeting. Nathan Trueblood gave us a kind welcome to his comfortable habitation, and next day accompanied us to a small meeting two or three miles from his house. It was an opportunity of profitable instruction to me, and possibly might be no less so to others. On Fifth-day we were at the week-day meeting at Blue River, in which I thought I was made sensible of the power of divine love, and spoke, I trust, to the encouragement of the afflicted, and such as were under depression; afterwards was held their Preparative Meeting, and the meeting of ministers and elders. In the latter I was much exercised, and ventured on some expression. Sixth day was very cold; we walked to the little town of Salem, about two miles distant, where we had a meeting in the Court-house. I had gone through much discouragement about it; but I sought to be simple and resigned, and to move in what I believed to be the leadings of the Spirit. I was favoured to feel more relieved than could have been hoped for. Seventh-day we attended their

Monthly Meeting. I was exercised under a concern to bring Friends into feeling for themselves and the low state of things among them; and in the meeting for discipline I was engaged to speak to different subjects. We went home with Matthew Coffin, an elderly friend, lately come with his wife and daughter from North Carolina.

I had requested public notice to be given of the meeting on First-day morning. It was a large gathering. I was much given up to labour honestly and faithfully in the work of the Gospel. I was exercised for the awakening of transgressors; and, having reason to fear that some of these had taken refuge in unbelief, it was no wonder if the terrors of the law, and the invitations of the Gospel, should be alike rejected. I trust some feeling of access was granted us in fervent supplication to the throne of grace, and in that engagement my burthen was for the time very much taken away. I am much relieved in believing that the Lord will more eminently reveal his power, and make it clearly manifest that nothing but the sensible renewings of his love can be effectual to the gathering of souls to Christ, or the exaltation of his blessed truth on the earth. Every mere semblance of rightly authorised ministry must fall when He arises to plead his own cause. Nothing but that which is spirit and life can stand in the day of his appearing. Ah! how fearfully do I tremble for myself when I am brought into the very depths on account of others.

Turning now again to the north, they visited the meetings along the Driftwood, and then proceeded towards Richmond.

We parted from our friends at Blue River in much love, and on Second-day reached the house of Thomas Newby, near Driftwood Meeting-house, having forded the Muskaketah. After the meeting for worship, and their Preparative Meeting on Fourth-day, we went home with Jacob Morris and his wife, kind Friends. We had an open, heart-tendering opportunity the next morning, in which, under the sensible feeling of Divine love, consolation and encouragement were offered both

to the friends and their daughters. Early in the evening we arrived at Thomas Newsome's, near Sandy-creek. There are four or five families in the neighbourhood recently emigrated from Carolina. We had a meeting with them in the evening, in which a door of utterance was opened. We set off soon after breakfast, and pursued our journey to a new settler's on the Flat Rock Creek. Being very remotely situated from other Friends, we appeared to be welcome guests, and the dear woman did much to try to make us comfortable. They gave us a bed; but our companions, with two other visitors who came in the course of the evening, had their lodging on the floor. It is one of the great inconveniences attendant on an early settlement in the woods, that they are expected to take in all of every class who apply for accommodation. Some friends gave us account of the number that had been housed on their cabin floors almost beyond credit.

On Seventh-day, having parted from our friends in love after a religious opportunity, we continued our journey, most of the way within sight of the waters of the Flat Rock. Our road was very much through the wilderness, sometimes five or six miles, or further, without seeing a house; but, considering that it is but about two years since the country was vacated by the Indians and offered for public sale, it far exceeded our expectation to find it so well inhabited, and in several places much improved, for the time they have had it in hand. I believe that nearly the whole of the State of Indiana has been purchased from the natives; and, instead of holding reservations of land in their former territory, as in Ohio, New York, &c., with the exception of a few who form a small settlement somewhere in the centre of the State, they have accepted an annuity from Congress, and gone over the Misssisippi. I do not pretend to much judgment in such things, but I think I have not seen in the course of my travels any country so well suited to support a large population as the interior of this State. Peach trees grow with astonishing rapidity, bearing fruit in three years, and in some instances in two years. In the older settled parts of the country we found some good apple orchards; and they give a most tantalizing description of the size and richness of their

water-melons. The country is undulating, with but few large hills, and not much that lies on a dead level; they have coals, and salt, and iron.

We dined in the woods by a large fire, and that night were well accommodated at the habitation of a wealthy settler of German extraction, who has brought plenty of good things into the wilderness, and purchased not less than 1000 acres of land. He was a zealous professor among the Baptists, and would not receive any remuneration for my accommodation, which I understand is not unfrequently the case with serious persons in America, especially when they know the traveller receives no pay for his ministry. It was First-day morning, and no small trial to me to turn out with the prospect of spending the day on the road; but unless we had made a halt in the woods—which, considering the weather, we could not, I believe, have done to any good purpose—I thought the time could not be spent more profitably than in our waggon; and having endeavoured to explain to our host the circumstances under which we were placed, and represented in pretty strong terms to our young friends how great a trial I felt it, my mind became more easy, and we had not an unpleasant day. Our lodging that night was not the most convenient; but, with our provision and many appliances, we did not suffer either for want of food or bedding. In the evening I read a few chapters to the family, which I trust was well received.

Just about dark the next day we arrived in the neighbourhood of Milford Meeting-house, and were hospitably entertained at John Bell's, whose father came from near Cockermouth. A meeting was appointed for the following day, and a large number attended, Friends and others. On Fourth-day we were at the week-day meeting at West Union. In the afternoon we came forward to West Grove, and attended their usual week-day meeting the next day.

We agreed that it might be safe for us to proceed thence direct for Richmond. I confess the attraction was very strong in that direction, as I was full of hope and expectation that I should find letters on my arrival. But there was not a single

English letter for me. I endeavoured to bear up, but it was a disappointment deeply felt. We went that evening to the house of Jesse Williams; they were kind friends, and having some understanding of the comforts and refinement of civilized life, though for the present inhabiting but a poor cabin, we found it a place of true rest. The meeting at Chester was large; and, being in good measure enabled to cast off the burthen that I believed to have been brought upon me, I felt more relieved than at many other times.

We returned with our friends to their quiet habitation, and went with them to their meeting at Whitewater, near Richmond, on First-day morning. This is one of the largest meetings in the state, containing, I suppose, not less than 120 or 130 families, forty of whom live in Richmond, which is a thriving village, finely situated on a high bank above the Whitewater river. Apprehending it might be safest to express a little respecting a right exercise of the mind on such occasions, I uttered a few sentences; and my heart being made tender before the Lord, I had to rejoice in the grace of our blessed Saviour, and was enabled to offer a word for the consolation of some weary and tribulated pilgrims, seeking to gather Friends to the humbling power of Christ, and to the experience of his baptism, that thus the will and wisdom of the creature might be made to bow in subjection to his Spirit, and that we might be prepared individually to become subjects of that kingdom which is not of this world. In the afternoon we went with James Pegg to his quiet and peaceful cabin about two miles out of town. We spent a pleasant, and I trust not an unprofitable evening together; and on Second-day he accompanied us to a meeting appointed for us at Orange. It was much the exercise of my mind that the people might be drawn from outward expectation and dependence, to a deep feeling of their own state.

We dined with a Friend in the neighbourhood. I thought I felt enough to warrant the expression of a few words, and I was strengthened to hope that I was still following the leading of the Heavenly Shepherd. It is a path of humbling and mortifying dedication; but if I can only feel enough to satisfy

me that it meets the approbation of Him for whose cause sake I am separated from my nearest connexions, and have not counted my life and my many earthly enjoyments dear unto myself in comparison of his blessed service—if He be pleased to continue his favour and protection, I trust I shall not complain, even though my inward conflicts and outward discouragements should much more abound. I increasingly feel the state of our Society to be low; the views and expectations of the people very much outward; the life of religion in some very much oppressed, and by others scarcely understood. It is to the thirsty and panting, to them who know and feel the burthen of sin, such as are groaning for deliverance, that Christ is precious, and his gospel a message of good tidings of great joy.

William Forster was now for some time engaged in visiting the numerous meetings of Friends in that part of the State of Indiana, believing himself "called upon to sound an alarm for the awakening of the careless, and being emboldened openly and plainly to preach Christ crucified as the means of our reconciliation, the way to the Father, and our only hope of salvation from the guilt and power of sin; proclaiming the word of invitation and encouragement to the contrite and heavy-laden." Having completed his labours in these districts, he returned again to the south-western parts of Ohio. Thence he writes :—

3rd mo. 25th, 1822. Near Lytle's Creek Meeting-house, Clinton County, Ohio.—There are times of divine favour when I feel the blessed influence of that love by which I was first drawn in spirit towards Friends in this country; and at these times I am much given up to the service of the Lord. At other times my conflicts and discouragements are past description. My present way of life presents so little that is suited to my taste and enjoyment, that I find occasion to offer up myself a

daily sacrifice; and this surrender of all I hold most dear is not without many pangs, and attained only through suffering.

It is most interesting to me, and sometimes very encouraging, to hear of what is going forward at home, and in other parts of the world; therefore, send me every scrap of news about Church and State—about the Bible and School Societies—and of all the good that is doing in the prisons, &c.; but most especially everything that relates to the Slave-trade, Africa, and the West Indies. Of all objects of Christian benevolence, this has the largest place in my mind.

A door of utterance seemed to be opened to me at meeting this morning; I was much engaged to preach Christ as the Saviour of men; and very earnest were my desires that Friends might be brought to feel, and in heart to acknowledge, their need of Him.

Whilst in the neighbourhood of Cincinnati, he felt attracted in Christian love towards Kentucky; and, crossing over into that State, he appointed meetings for worship for the inhabitants of several of the principal towns, returning into Ohio at the end of the Fourth Month.

We had bad roads and sometimes hard travelling in Kentucky. Our meetings were in the principal towns in the parts through which we travelled, some of them large and much crowded. We were at Georgetown, Frankfort, Shelbyville, Vasalia, Lexington, Winchester, Mount Sterling, Paris, Washington, and Maysville. The people in many places were very much strangers to Friends,—many of them had scarcely seen any of our Society before. We crossed the Ohio at Maysville, and had some rough travelling on our way to Fall Creek.

Resuming his labours among Friends, he attended the Quarterly Meeting at Fairfield, after which, he writes:—

5th mo. 1st. Ross County, Ohio.—We were favoured to wind up our labours among Friends in the Miami country in much peace, and we parted one from the other in much love. In our visit to the families of Cincinnati Monthly Meeting, I believe I honestly laboured in that love which seeks to gather and restore : it occupied about two weeks. When in the city we began early in the morning, and were engaged till late in the evening, almost every day. The evening before we left, I was at a large meeting at the Court-house. Through Heavenly mercy, after that meeting I felt much relieved in spirit ; and had the comfort of a quiet, peaceful, and devoted mind.

The attempts made in various ways to undermine the Christian faith, and to lower the standard of Christian practice, in the religious Society which he so much loved, continued deeply to affect him.

Very often since I came into this land (he writes about this time), have I deeply felt the power of that saying of our Lord, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth." Notwithstanding all that I have heard since I came into this country, I am fully of the mind that the underrating of the great privilege afforded us, by common consent, of the appropriation of one day in seven to public worship and domestic quiet, is in itself evidence of a low state of religious concern ; and is likely to have the effect of breaking down much of the barrier of religious restraint around our Society. *

When his religious services in the Western States were brought to a conclusion, he took his journey across the State of Ohio, into the north-western parts of the State of New York.

* A disregard of the proper observance of the first day of the week was one of the results of the influence and teaching of Elias Hicks, who had been travelling in those parts not long before.

CHAPTER XXV.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

TRAVELS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING, AND IN LOWER CANADA.

On returning from the West, William Forster spent about six months in the western and north-eastern parts of the States of New York and Vermont, and in Lower Canada; but few and detached are the details collected from his letters respecting this long and interesting journey.

7th mo. 18th. Milo, Ontario County, State of New York.— We have been travelling very hard most of the time since we came into this State. The heat of the weather is at times extremely overcoming, and in some instances we have had two meetings a day. We made considerable exertion to reach the Quarterly Meeting at Farmington on the 3rd instant; since which we have been at meetings at Henrietta, Wheatland, Riga, Shelby Royallin, East Royallin, Hartland, North Hartland, Rochester, Palmyra, East Palmyra, and South Farmington, and this morning at Milo. We hope to make a stage to-night, on our way to the meeting of Deerfield, perhaps eighty miles distant, just within the Pennsylvania line, and on one of the head waters of the west branch of the Susquehannah; we purpose coming from thence to Elmira, near the south end of Seneca Lake, thence to Hector, and perhaps have meetings about Junius and Scipio, go on to Auburn, and take a line of meetings up to some of the new settlements at the eastern extremity of Lake Ontario, and then perhaps 150 miles across the country to Peru and Lake Champlain, and to the meetings in Vermont. I have

passed through considerable exercise respecting Canada. I trust I have sincerely sought to be directed of the Lord, and though at times given up in heart to visit the meetings of Friends in that province, if it should be laid upon me, I have had to believe that the time is not fully come. I do not feel myself excused entirely, and I may have to cross over at the falls of Lake Ontario; but I hardly expect it. Our gracious Lord knows why I am thus tried; and I trust, if I abide in patience before Him, that his blessing will rest upon the dispensation of his own divine wisdom.

We were one night and part of two days at Caleb M'Comber's; he was very open with me, much to my comfort; dear man, he has to suffer deeply; and I believe, as to fellow-helpers with whom he can freely take counsel, is much alone. He is considered a sound minister of Christ, and I have felt him much of a father in the Truth; rough in the exterior, but truly tender in spirit.

The times are very gloomy as to our poor Society in this land: it is a day of speculation and unbelief. The people are seeking after novelties, much to the neglect of the work of their own salvation, I fear; my principal exercise is to bring them to feel their own infirmities and corruptions, and to lead them to look to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

Pursuing the course indicated above, he visited the meetings of Friends constituting several Quarterly Meetings within the limits of New York Yearly Meeting, till he reached the borders of Lake Champlain.

8th mo. 19th. Peru, near Lake Champlain.—I suppose that dear George Withy is now about to return to New York, and that in the course of two or three weeks he will be at liberty to embark for England. I can hardly tell to what feelings the prospect of his very speedy liberation has brought me, nor how thankful I should feel might I be allowed to

join him; but, as I cannot at present discover an opening for my escape, I desire to bow in humble, submissive acquiescence with what I reverently trust is the will of our gracious Lord.

The account of the famine so prevalent amongst the poor in Ireland has been truly affecting to me. I suppose there has been a general subscription in many parts of England for their relief. How very different in this respect is the situation of America from Ireland. It is more than fifteen months since I have met with any person that has asked alms (with the exception of an old man in Ohio, who looked very fat and lazy), or whose appearance has seemed to indicate the least degree of want of food. I suppose there are many counties in the western states in which they have no poor; everybody that is industrious may obtain enough and to spare.

Grand Isle, Lake Champlain.—We set off, accompanied by William Keese and his wife. They brought us in their carriage to the house of a newly-married couple at Cumberland-head, and we had hoped to cross last evening; but the wind, which was rising during the latter part of the night, blew quite a storm, with thunder and lightning, and it was thought most desirable for us to give up the attempt. Early this morning our friends hoisted a signal, and Seth Griffith brought his own boat, which was quite as small as I thought desirable; but the Friends are so much used to the lake, which is often very rough and rolls with a considerable swell, that they have learned to manage their little craft with great dexterity.

We found a pleasant home at the house of Seth Griffith, and had a religious opportunity in the family. He is an active, industrious man, and, withal, I should think, a steady, upright Friend, one that has prospered beyond many in his temporal concerns. Two or three and twenty years ago he began in the woods with nothing but his axe and one English shilling, and now he has a fine farm, cleared, and well cultivated; large flourishing orchards, a handsome frame-house, and good outbuildings. The land in that part of the island is

very fertile, and remarkably well adapted for orchards. The lake, which is upwards of 100 miles in length, affords great facility for communication, and they find a good market for their fruit and some other articles of produce in Lower Canada. The distant view of the mountains, both in New York and Vermont, is very grand. They remind me more of our Scotch and Welsh scenery than anything I have seen in America. These lakes are many of them very deep. The accounts they give of the length of line let down without finding a bottom are almost incredible.

We were shown the spot at Plattsburg where the engagement took place in the war in 1814 between the American and English flotilla. The heat of the battle was just at the time Friends were at meeting on First-day morning, and near enough for them to feel the shock of every gun fired. Friends sat still in their meeting, which they said was a remarkably solemn time, and on their breaking up they found that the British were defeated. Our host told me that he was on board the Commodore's ship the next day, and he gave a most affecting description of the dreadful carnage, almost too shocking to relate. The British commander, Commodore Downie, fell in the engagement; it did not appear that he had been wounded, but his death was considered to be occasioned by "the wind of a ball" which passed close by him while he was upon deck. The two Commodores, MacDennough and Downie, had been schoolfellows—probably in Scotland. I was particularly struck by the account they gave us of Downie's funeral. All the American officers attended in procession, and MacDennough was so overcome that he stood and wept like a child.

We had a pleasant evening for our return; the wind not being in our favour, the friends took to their oars with good heart, and soon pushed us over. We intended to proceed early next morning to the ferry, hoping to cross the lake in time to reach Ferrisburg that night; but I was so very unwell that I was afraid to move. We waited some hours, and then came fifteen or sixteen miles to the house of a person whose wife professed with Friends, where we were kindly

entertained for the night. We had a fine afternoon for the ride; and, within the last three or four miles, at a turn in the road, we descended from the high ground on which we had been travelling, and had a charming view of the lake and the opposite shore—a prospect equal in beauty and grandeur to any I have seen either in Britain or America. The lake is nowhere very wide; but the little bays and the wooded promontories had as fine an effect as anything one can well conceive. The town of Burlington, to our left, formed a very interesting feature in the prospect. The scenery on these shores contains so much of the picturesque in mountain, wood and water, that one may well imagine the time will arrive when the citizens of Philadelphia and Baltimore will make a visit to Lake Champlain and Lake George as much a tour of pleasure as it has been to our south-country people of late years to visit the lakes of Cumberland and the highlands of Scotland. We rode about two miles to the ferry. The morning was fine, and with a light breeze we had a very pleasant sail of about three miles, which took us just an hour; and we reached our friend Thomas Robinson's at Ferrisburg to a late dinner. Our friends seem to be living in the enjoyment of more of the comforts of life than we had often met with. We could have enjoyed staying the night; but, considering it was not for that we had left our happy homes, we soon made up our minds to proceed.

On the 24th, we came from Ferrisburg to a Friend's house, near the meeting-house at Monkton, and next morning attended the meeting at Starkesborough. I endeavoured to do my best in the way of plain dealing. It was heavy labour; but possibly the witness might be reached in the hearts of a few. In the afternoon we parted from our friend William Keese, who had kindly crossed the Lake with us. He had shown us much love. I think he told me that he was the first Friend who settled in that part of the State of New York, not much more than thirty years ago. On his landing on the shores of Lake Champlain, he had to cut a path through the woods to the site of his present premises, where he built himself a tent of bark, &c., and was two whole weeks without

hearing the voice of any living creature. Now he has a fine farm, good frame-house, orchard, &c., and 170 acres of cleared land, mostly the work of his own hands. We came that evening into the neighbourhood of South Starkesborough, a wild, hilly, or rather mountainous country, something resembling the ridges and valleys of the Alleghany. Next day attended their meeting, which is but newly settled, and held in a school-house. After a considerable time of silent waiting, my way was opened to some expression, which was a little to my relief. Our next stage was to Lincoln, a settlement of Friends just under one of the highest points of the Green Mountains. We had a long ride that evening, back to Ferrisburg, where we met with much kindness from our friend Thomas Robinson, his wife and son. We attended the Monthly Meeting next day; and I believe I was there in the way of my duty, though it was a time of deeply suffering exercise. On Fifth-day we were at a meeting at Monkton, a time of deep exercise and of considerable expression. I hope Christ was preached among them; but there was not that full measure of the baptizing power that I love to feel. By about sunset we got to the house of Timothy Chase, an elderly man not long since united to our Society. We breakfasted at his son's the next morning, and then went four miles to the Monthly Meeting at Lincoln. John iv. 1, and Jeremiah vi. 20, were much before me. The impression made upon my mind was greatly to my own instruction. I saw that all our attempts and endeavours to exalt the cause of Truth, without the constraining influence of Divine love, costly as the sacrifice may be in our own apprehension, even as incense from Sheba or sweet cane from a far country, much as it may satisfy ourselves and please the people, never will in any degree promote the work of true religion upon the earth. I had afterwards some service of a general nature. The meeting held late, and we had a long ride, by the light of the full moon, to Starkesborough.

Early next morning, having P. Tare and his wife for our pilots, we set off for Montpelier. It was a long and fatiguing journey; the first part of the way hilly, bad road. After we

reached the valley of the Onion River, a beautiful stream and certainly worthy of a handsomer name, we followed its course in an easterly direction through the mountains, and, for the greater part of the remainder of the journey, had a good turnpike road. The scenery on every hand was rude and very interesting: the rocks and mountains, had there been less wood, would have forcibly reminded me of some of my travels in North Wales and in Argyleshire. The valley finely cultivated; and, amongst other crops in rich perfection, I saw a small field of sunflowers in full bloom. They grow to a prodigious size in this country, and the seed is valuable for the oil that is extracted from it. We came to Clarke Stephens's. He has a pretty large family of young people grown up. Until very lately, theirs was a remarkable specimen of a mixed American family. They had not only their aged parents on both sides in addition to their own large family, but a married son and his wife also. We attended their meeting on First-day morning, which is but small. I sat for a long time in a low state of mind. I ventured on my knees in prayer, which was a little to my help and comfort; and afterwards I was engaged in ministry, in which I thought I was made sensible of the healing influences of the love of Christ, and of his gracious invitations to them that were afar off. In the afternoon we went down into the town of Montpelier (which, though not a large place, may, I suppose, be considered as the capital of Vermont), to a meeting appointed for the inhabitants, and held in the State-house, a large, commodious building. It was more fully attended than I had expected, and principally by persons of very respectable appearance. The love and power of Christ rose into dominion, much to my confirmation and rejoicing, and I believe we separated under a good influence.

From the neighbourhood of Montpelier he went northwards to the small settlement of Friends at Derby, and thence to the shores of Lake Memphremagog, &c.

The lake is somewhere about forty miles in length, and varies in breadth from one to four or five miles: it was about a mile and a half wide where we crossed. We walked about two miles to a Friend's house, where we were kindly welcomed; a meeting was appointed for the afternoon, and they had their house pretty well filled. Next morning we had a religious opportunity with the parents and their daughter, an interesting young woman who seemed to be sunk far into a consumption.

We had a rough mountainous ride, about thirty miles; much of the way extremely bad road. I had to walk a good deal, and was at last quite worn with fatigue. We refreshed ourselves by the way at the house of a respectable farmer, not long since emigrated from Vermont, and settled in the woods; for most of that part of Lower Canada is a newly-settled country. He pleased me much by his praise of the Colonial Government; and, from all that I hear, I question whether Great Britain ever had a better name in any of her colonies than she now enjoys in Lower Canada. Had she been as kind to her other colonies, she would probably have held them still. It was quite dark when we reached our friend Gideon Ball's; but they took us in kindly. The friends exerted themselves and got us a meeting appointed for eleven o'clock yesterday. It is pretty much a new settlement of Friends. The meeting consisted of about twelve families, and has been established not much short of two years. The soil surpasses our expectation; the winters are very long, on an average not much shorter than six months; but vegetation is so very rapid that there is a prospect of their making a very comfortable subsistence; and the land being cheap — two dollars per acre—the climate more congenial to their constitutions, and the country well watered, it has hitherto proved healthy, and I expect Friends in low circumstances from Vermont and New Hampshire will give it the preference to Ohio and Indiana. The meeting was more to my encouragement and relief than many others we have lately attended.

After speaking of the privations and difficulties of a backwood life, he adds:—

I often regret that such of our friends as are determined on removing to America have not more correct information respecting the state of the country, and the reasonable prospects it affords to industrious emigrants. Could they be prevailed upon to become tenants in the older settled parts of the country for two or three years, until they became accustomed to the climate and have habituated themselves to the American mode of farming, they might perhaps add a little to their property, instead of spending a considerable portion before they reach the place of their proposed destination. I feel much interested in the subject, both as relates to our friends in England and friends in America; for I have heard of several instances in which the latter have been under the necessity of rendering considerable assistance to some of our friends.

9th mo. 11th. Higgins' Tavern, Yamasa River, Farnham.—A young man came up from the town, who had been at the meeting the preceding evening, apparently with a wish to obtain some further knowledge of Friends' principles, and I could not but pay him some little attention. He was agreeable and modest in his manner, and I should suppose of good education. I am but a poor hand at religious conversation; but I endeavoured to answer his inquiries in simplicity and plainness, without evincing too much of a proselyting spirit.

We had the family collected on Third-day morning. I trust it might prove to some of the young people, as well as to their parents, an opportunity of encouragement. We had another hilly journey to Danville. Our road lay over some high ground, and we had a fine view to the east of the White Mountains in New Hampshire, said to be the highest in the United States. It was the day of the general election of members for the State Legislature, and we met the citizens, dressed in their best, going to give their annual suffrage.

Every township—and there are 200—sends one member to the General Assembly, which usually sits from four to six weeks in the fall of the year, and the members receive a dollar and half per day as the remuneration of their services. I had some conversation with a country farmer on the road, who seemed proud of his privileges. He told me that their elections were generally conducted with order, and that they were mostly over by four o'clock in the afternoon. They are often contested, but the poll always closes the same day; and, besides returning their members to the Assembly, all their town officers are appointed at the same time, and they also give their vote for Governor and Members of Council. These have the appearance of valuable privileges, and probably they are so; but I cannot be sure that they tend to the harmony of the neighbourhood, or to individual happiness. It has a natural tendency to divide the people into parties, and to excite hard thoughts and unkind feelings, such as are not very soon overcome. And the annual recurrence of elections hardly gives time for one contest to subside before another begins.

The meeting next day, which was held at the Friends' house, was very small. As to myself, I trust it was under the Divine anointing, that towards the close of the opportunity I uttered a few sentences. We reached a Friends' house at Barton on Fifth-day night, situated near a beautiful little lake surrounded by rocky scenery. Here we were to determine our course of proceeding into Canada. And I was very much tried before I could come to a satisfactory conclusion. Our meeting next day was in a school-house. The number of Friends is small, and considering this and the meeting at Danville were newly-established by friends professing to be convinced, they were not quite such times of liveliness of feeling as one might have hoped for.

For several days I have been much exercised under an apprehension that I might find it most to my relief to extend our journey as far as Montreal. I believe I have humbly and earnestly sought the counsel and direction of the Lord. Until we set off this morning, I did not know but we should

shape our course for Vermont; and when we came to the place where the road divided we sat a considerable time in the carriage, waiting for right direction. After I had given up to coming here, and we had set forward, my conflicts in measure subsided, and I feel a little hope that we shall not be utterly forsaken. It was between ten and eleven o'clock when we took the road into the woods: we found it very bad,—deep holes, and mud and roots, and broken log causeways. We got here about three o'clock, not having travelled more than twelve miles. It was half-past four when we and our horses had finished our bait; and, as we found there was nothing of a decent town for fifteen miles, part through woods and very bad road, and the people mostly the poorer class of French Canadians, we thought it best to stay here for the night, and take a very early start to-morrow morning.

The climate in this country is variable far beyond my expectation. On the night of the 29th of last month there was frost; since that we have had much cold wet weather; yesterday it was sultry and oppressively warm; to-day it has been more temperate, about equal to our weather in this month. We have about fifty miles from this place to Montreal.

Turning his thoughts to the western regions where he had laboured so long, he adds:—

When I was in the newly-settled parts of Indiana, my sympathies were much awakened for Friends, under an apprehension of their many and great disadvantages, particularly in regard to their difficulties in obtaining learning for their children, &c.; and, fearing that many families were entirely destitute of the Scriptures, I thought it right to request two friends, who were visiting the families of Cherry-grove Monthly Meeting, a newly-settled district, and extending very near to the line which till very lately formed the Indian frontier, to make inquiry as they went along from house to house, and to let me know the result; and I partly promised them that I would supply the deficiency. Whilst I

was at Cincinnati, I received a letter in reply, stating that in that Monthly Meeting they had found fifty-one families without a Bible: the number was much larger than I expected; but, considering it an object provided for by J. J. Gurney's liberality, I purchased them at the Depository, and left directions to have them carefully sent, and no doubt but they have been received and distributed. The largest proportion were of the brevier letter, and a few pica for elderly people. I confess I am strongly inclined to pursue the inquiry, though I scarcely know how to obtain the means of supplying their necessities.

We should think that there was no way of more effectually supplying this deficiency than by the establishment of Bible Associations. Most earnestly do I wish that such an object could be effected in those parts; but they are so poor, and money is so very scarce, that I really doubt whether, if they approved the object of the society, they would consider themselves able to subscribe.*

* It will be borne in mind that these things were written more than forty years ago. There is something truly interesting in contemplating William Forster in that lonely tavern, on the borders of Canada, casting his broad glance over what is best adapted to "ameliorate the condition of man," and yielding up his heart to sympathise with his brethren in the "newly-settled parts of Indiana," amidst their many disabilities. He lived to see better days in those districts,—brighter hopes were realized before long. His own labours, and the well-directed, efficient efforts of others, were abundantly blessed. Such was the influx of Friends from all parts, but chiefly from the South,—to escape from the evils of slavery,—that within a comparatively short time Indiana Yearly Meeting became the largest on the American continent, and, at the same time, one of the best organized for carrying out the various functions of a Christian church. Schools and Bible Associations were established; Scriptural instruction was attended to; and institutions for educational purposes of a more extended kind were set on foot. The results of these, and other exertions to promote the welfare of the community, are very interesting and encouraging. Within the last few years the large Yearly Meeting of Indiana has been divided, for the purpose of more effectually administering the affairs of the church, into three, viz., Indiana, Western, and Iowa Yearly Meetings. The educational and other statistics of these three Yearly Meetings are highly satisfactory, showing that, with upwards of 30,000 members under their care, a well

And again about the same time, from the same parts in Lower Canada, he writes home :—

Do let me have a Bible report, and as much about schools and the slave-trade and prison concerns as thou canst get: they are all objects of great interest to me, but none more so than the Bible Society. I look forwards with a strong and steady faith in its accomplishing the greatest object ever effected by any human institution in any age of the world: indeed I cannot but regard it as a powerful auxiliary to every other attempt in ameliorating the condition of man.

It does not appear to what extent, or how long, William Forster travelled in Lower Canada; but he seems to have been much interested in his visit,

organized system of general supervision is efficiently carried out. The last *undivided* Yearly Meeting of Indiana was held in 1857.

It may be interesting to some readers, who have no opportunity of referring to published documents, to glance at the usual annual statistical statements handed in to that meeting.

Number of children between 5 and 15	5,825
Do. do. between 15 and 20	2,860
	8,685
Number of children taught in schools under the superintendence of Monthly Meetings' Committees	3,732
Number of children taught in schools not under such superintendence	3,365
Number of children growing up without school education	2
Number of schools not under the superintendence of Monthly Meetings' Committees, but taught by Friends	197
Number of Meetings without Friends' Schools; where such exist, they are generally on the Meeting-house premises	61
Number of First-day Scripture Schools under the care of Committees	138
Number of Meetings without such schools	23

The average attendance at First-day Scripture Schools is supposed to be between three and four thousand.

Annual inquiry is made as to the supply of Bibles; and the answer, that year, was—"Each family of Friends is in possession of a copy of the Holy Scriptures."

and especially in the cause of general education among the Canadian population. Not long after he had left those parts he makes the following reference to them in writing from the State of Maine, where he was then pursuing his religious labours :—

I thought they seemed to have surmounted the principal difficulties with regard to the school at Montreal, and, from appearances when I was there, I hope it is now going on prosperously. I cannot but consider it an important station, not merely from the large and rapidly increasing population of the city; but, if happily the prejudices of the Catholics should relax, there will be a very extensive field of usefulness among the French population in Lower Canada. They are ignorant, bigoted, and priest-ridden in the extreme; and I should think as difficult of access as the native Irish, or any of the Catholic nations on the Continent. If men of benevolence and well-tempered Christian zeal could be found suitable for the office of itinerant schoolmasters, I think great good might be done; but then they must be Frenchmen, and not appear in the character of missionaries. The population is principally located on the large rivers; for 300 miles on both sides of the St. Lawrence, it is said to have the appearance of one long village. I hope it will be a principal object of the Committee of the British and Foreign School Society, to embrace every opening for training native French

They have reports of Bible, Book, and Tract Committees; on Earlham College; on Concerns of the People of Colour; on Manual Labour Institutes; on Indian Concerns, &c., &c.

Since the division of the Yearly Meeting, the statistics of the three Yearly Meetings are equally satisfactory.

From the last printed reports (1864) it appears that there were only three meetings within their limits without First-day Scripture Schools, viz.: in the new Yearly Meeting of Iowa, *two;* in Indiana Yearly Meeting, *one;* and in Western Yearly Meeting, *none.* It is at the same time interesting to find that in each of these three Yearly Meetings a large number of parents or heads of families participate in the benefits of those schools. A great encouragement to persevering effort in a right direction.

Canadians for country schoolmasters. I never was more impressed with a sense of the importance of the foreign objects of that Society than whilst travelling in Lower Canada.

I want very much to see Marsden's account of his two last visits to New Zealand. Since my travels to the westward on this continent, I have felt more than ever interested respecting newly-explored parts of the world, and the aborigines of every country.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

VISIT TO FRIENDS IN NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING.

From Lower Canada William Forster appears to have returned to the State of Vermont, and to have passed thence into New Hampshire, the first of the New England States. There his course was first directed towards the north-eastern parts. Though nearly five months were spent, at this time, amongst Friends in New England, he did not visit all the meetings belonging to that Yearly Meeting; and the accounts of this period of his religious labours are altogether very fragmentary and incomplete. The first notice of his having entered upon this new field of service occurs in a letter finished at Woolfsborough, near Lake Winnipisiogee, addressed to J. J. Gurney after hearing of the decease of his wife.

To Joseph John Gurney.

10th mo. 1st, 1822.

My dearest Joseph,—Scarcely a day has passed for many weeks, but I have wished it were in my power to tell thee of the very near and intimate fellowship, the brotherly love and affectionate sympathy with which I have cherished the remembrance of thee; and how much I have desired to be given up to feel with thee in thy depths of sorrow, and the thankfulness with which I have at times been reverently bowed before the Lord, in considering the mercies vouchsafed to thee in these days of mourning, of painful

privation, and acute suffering. My wife sent me the earliest intelligence, both of the illness of thy dearest Jane, and of her peaceful close; and her letter from Earlham, to which thine was annexed, gave me a deeply interesting account of the faith and hope with which thou wast sustained, and particularly of the strong and animating assurance so graciously granted thee, that she, for whom thou hadst to mourn, was gathered in an accepted hour. . . . . Surely He, whom thou hast acknowledged as thy Lord and Saviour—He who has been made "precious" to thee, as our High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities—He who, having borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, is continually thy Mediator at the throne of grace—will never suffer thee to be moved from that patient, filial confidence, to which He Himself has brought thee, even though thou shouldst be allowed to sink into very humbling feelings of the unworthiness and insufficiency of the creature.

I take great comfort in the persuasion, that, under thy afflictions (sanctified as I humbly trust they are, by the blessing of the Lord richly resting upon thee), He is enlarging thy experience, and preparing thee more fully for his service upon earth, and for an inheritance incorruptible in the heavens. And if, in his light, thy path be opened to a more extended sphere of religious usefulness, I cannot say to what degree my heart is engaged in desire for thy faithfulness, thy entire devotedness to God; if He hath separated thee to Himself, for his own service (and surely we must not, cannot, doubt it), we may reverently trust that, in the riches of his love, He will fulfil his many gracious promises in thy experience; in blessing thee, make thee a blessing, and in his own love and power render thee instrumental to the confirmation and comfort of his heritage. Some months since (and I ought to have told thee of it sooner) thou wast brought before me with a peculiarly sweet and solemn feeling of what I take to be the heavenly unction, in association with Jer. xxvi. 2, "Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words which I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word."

Thy last letter was most valuable to me—and which of thine can I say is not so?—rendered, I assure thee, more acceptable by dear Jane's addition. I found it at Erie, in Pennsylvania; and I can well remember the strength and comfort it afforded me, when in a pensive hour, and under some discouragements, I went and sat on a log, and read it one evening in the western part of New York, not very far from the shores of Lake Ontario. I had partaken, with thy many friends, in lively interest and solicitude in regard to thy state of health; and very much wished for more particulars relating to thee, in this and every other respect, than my wife is always able to send me. When thou canst write, do, my beloved Joseph, send me a short history of thyself, and thy dear children too. I sometimes take pleasure in anticipating the day when, released from my present arduous exercises, I shall be restored again to that near and intimate religious communion with many of my dearest friends; rendered dearer to me than ever by my long separation from them, and the sympathy I have been brought to feel with them, under the trials they have passed through in my absence. Probably dear Fowell and Hannah, and the rest of your autumn party, are now in Norfolk; these are times when I do not fail to think of you all with much interest and affection; it is a real satisfaction to me to reflect that thou hast such frequent opportunity of being with Fowell, and that thou canst lean upon him with so much confidence; I think he must have been a real comfort and support to thee. To enjoy the opportunity of his society, and to possess his intimate friendship, is a privilege few can fully appreciate. Anna sends me a more encouraging account of dearest Hannah. I trust we may be allowed an interest in that language of prayer on her behalf:—"Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil," and that many bright and peaceful days are yet in store for her. I wish I had time to write to Fowell, and send him a few notes I made on the state of the prison at Montreal, and the Penitentiary at Windsor, in Vermont. It is not often that I get a sight of English

papers, but by a few that were lately sent me from Philadelphia, I am glad to find that he is unwearied in his parliamentary course, and I trust he will be encouraged and empowered to pursue his very arduous and important duties. In my serious moments, I remember him, as I believe he would wish me to do, I trust not without a prayer that his strength in the Lord may be renewed, and that a blessing from above may more eminently rest upon him and his labours. I feel much relief and real satisfaction in hearing that the subject of the Slave Trade and of Slavery has such deep hold on his mind.

Woolfsborough, New Hampshire,
18th of 10th mo., 1822.

I know thou wilt not expect a very detailed account of my travels, much as I must acknowledge it to be due to the affectionate interest thou hast taken in my progress. I do not doubt but my dear wife had satisfaction in giving thee many particulars from my letters, and she has told thee enough to satisfy thee, that my path has been one of many trials, and often of much discouragement, and I think thou wilt not be surprised to hear that it continues to be so; but, through all, I am not left without confidence in the care and guidance of our gracious Lord; and sometimes I am animated to persevere, by the rising of a gentle hope that, notwithstanding my very many infirmities, He condescends to accept my dedication, imperfect as it is, and to acknowledge me among his servants; if this be vouchsafed to the end, it is all I dare to ask, and I am sure it will be more than I deserve. I trust thou wilt feel for me, when I say, that I have not been able to discover a door open for my release at as early a period as my beloved wife and my many dear friends may probably expect my return. I wish to stand constantly on the watch, ready to accept the very first intimation that may be granted me; and very earnestly do I crave an interest in the prayers of all who can feel with me, that I may be endued with patient resignation to the Divine will, and entire devotedness to the service of the Lord, until

in the same love and power in which He made me willing to forsake all for his name's sake, He may be pleased to lead me back again to the enjoyment of my many social and domestic comforts.

Farewell, my beloved friend; in the love and fellowship of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, believe me as ever, most truly thine,

WILLIAM FORSTER.

From Woolfsborough William Forster proceeded to the meetings in the North-east, and it is not till his return from those remote parts that the following allusion is made to his visit there :—

12th mo. 2nd. Lewistown, State of Maine.—I can well believe my friends at home will feelingly and gratefully participate with me in the comfort of our having accomplished our visit to the north-east before the setting in of winter. Our furthest point in that direction was about fifty miles beyond the Kennebeck river. Our travelling will now be for the most part in a line parallel with the coast till we reach Boston, and I suppose most of the meetings which we have not visited in New England are in parts of the country as long settled as any on the Continent. From Portland, which we hope to reach on Sixth-day evening, we propose to make a little circuit to Dover, on the Piscataway, and thence towards Salem, &c.; and, when clear of those parts, we shall probably proceed in a direct course, by way of Providence, to Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting and two others on the Hudson river, and by New York to Burlington and Philadelphia. Such of my dear friends as are aware of the unsettled state of our Society in many places in that direction, will, I trust, bear me in their remembrance for good. My kind and upright-hearted friend and patiently devoted companion, John Paul, is a real comfort to me; he enjoys good health, and even spirits. Our horses hold out wonderfully; and I have the satisfaction to add that my own health is just now much

stronger and better than during the warm weather. Were it all winter, cold as it is in America, we English people could pass through the country with much more ease and rapidity than during the summer and fall; but I find it well for me to bear in mind that the seasons and climate are in infinitely better ordering than ours, even in the hands of Him whom I desire to serve. Therefore it is good for us, committing ourselves and all that pertains to us to the merciful care of Divine Providence, to labour after resignation to his holy will, and to cherish hope in his faithfulness and love.

A few days later, after having received some books from England, he writes:—

8th. Westbrook, near Portland.—The account of Doctor Bateman interested me deeply. I think it might be useful to young medical students as a warning against the awful doctrine of materialism, which it is said has been imbibed by some people, I hope and trust a very few, in this country.

Do tell me whether the Bible Society has the same hold on the minds of Friends and the people at large as before I left England. I feel increasingly interested in its great and most important object, the diffusion of the knowledge of Christianity in all nations and languages; and to hear of its progress and prosperity seldom fails to give me a fresh spring of life, something almost amounting to holy joy, if such an one as I may venture to look so high.

William Forster had now been absent from home more than two years and-a-half, and he often keenly felt his lengthened separation from his beloved wife and near connexions. In reference to this, he says:—

20th. Meadersborough.—I am a little animated in hope this evening, that though it may please the Lord to prove us by protracting our present trial beyond what we had at one time

looked to, when these days of suffering shall be fully accomplished, He will give us the reward which, of all others, next to the evidence of his Divine approbation, we should most desire—He will give us again one to the other in that love in which we have enjoyed our greatest earthly happiness. Perhaps no one will feel my detention more deeply and more acutely than my dearest mother; and, next to thyself, there are none for whom I feel it so much. I do long very much to see her and my beloved father.

In allusion to a prospect of future religious service in other States, he adds:—

Never did anything look more awful in my view. To go back again among the dear, loving Friends, in the backwoods of Indiana, notwithstanding all the disagreeables in their way of life, would seem light in comparison with visiting some of those large meetings in New York State, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, and Jersey. Pray for me, that I may be favoured with strength to meet the discouragements of the day, and to maintain my integrity in Christ without wavering, that our cruel enemy may not have to glory in the fainting of a professed standard-bearer.

12th mo. 31st. Yarmouth, Cape Cod.—Writing upon the eve of a new year brings me to much serious feeling both as to the past and the future. How very little do I seem to have done within the past year! And of how much imperfection must I reproach myself in respect of that submission and dedication with which, in my most favoured moments, I have desired to offer up myself to the service of the Lord. And many I expect will be the conflicts and trials, and fears and sorrows, and temptations of the coming year. May it please the Lord, in the aboundings of his mercy and love, to have thee and our precious boy constantly in his holy keeping, to watch over you by night and by day, and preserve you from every harm. I feel most deeply and tenderly for our afflicted and bereaved friend, J. J. G. He is preciously near to me in the fellowship of the Gospel of Christ; and my spirit is

made humbly contrite before the Lord, as I am enabled to commend him and his tender babes to the protection of Almighty God.

Since I have been enabled to commit myself more fully to the Lord, I have been favoured with the enjoyment of more inward tranquillity than for some months past; and such a feeling of rest and submission to the Divine will has attended me, that I am supported in confidence and hope that I shall be rightly directed either to return home in the course of next year, or to proceed into Canada and the Southern States; so as that, after all my many sorrows, and cares, and fears, I shall be favoured to close my labours at the accepted time, and to return with quietness.

I should very much like to have a fresh supply of the Children's Tracts; and the more that are sent bound the better. I think they will be so adapted for the children of poor Friends in Carolina and Tennessee. I intend to take quite a store of spelling-books with me. I feel so very earnest to do all that I can to promote a little learning for Friends' children in those remote countries; for really at present, in that respect, they are much worse off than the children of the poor blacks in New York, and even than the recaptured negroes at Sierra Leone. How much do I wish that I could get friends everywhere to feel as I do on this very important subject!

William Forster was closely occupied in visiting the meetings of Friends in the southern parts of New England Yearly Meeting to the end of First Month; but no detailed record has been met with of his religious engagements during that period.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

ENGAGEMENTS IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK, UPPER CANADA, AND IN PARTS OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Leaving the limits of New England Yearly Meeting, William Forster again entered the State of New York, and visited some of the meetings in the south-eastern corner of it, on his way to Pennsylvania. To this part of his labours the following reference is made in a letter to his wife:—

Nine Partners, New York, 2nd mo. 5th, 1823.—We came to Nine Partners on Second-day evening. Yesterday was the meeting of ministers and elders, and to-day the Quarterly Meeting; both of them very exercising meetings to me. I have endeavoured to be faithful. This is the third time I have been at meetings in New York State, and the same burthen rests upon me, with rather an increase of weight. When this arrives I shall probably be in Philadelphia. Let me have thy prayers for my help and support, that, as a door of utterance is opened for me, I may be strengthened to preach the gospel of Christ in its own simplicity, and power, and love.

It does not appear how long he was detained in the State of New York. We next meet with him

pursuing his labours among Friends in Pennsylvania. After mentioning several meetings which he had attended in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, to the westward of the city, he writes :—

London Grove, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 4th mo. 9th.— I found my way more open than at some other places, and was enabled to preach Christ crucified in the presence of many by whom I had to believe it was regarded as foolishness. But, blessed be his name, I trust it was his power that strengthened me to bear testimony to that love in which He took upon Him our nature and offered up himself a sacrifice for sin. I have never apprehended myself called upon to bear more decided testimony to the eternal divinity of the Lord Jesus than within the last few weeks. It has been my constant engagement to keep steadfast to the language of Scripture; and, though I have been sensible that in some places it was not acceptable, yet the power of Divine love has so far prevailed that, for the time, it has appeared to me that all opposition was subdued. The Lord alone knows how I have gone on my way trembling. We have been in parts where these new notions, tending, as I am persuaded, to utter infidelity, have much prevailed. Elias Hicks has many friends and adherents in Pennsylvania. I have no time to give a connected account of the trials and exercises Friends in Philadelphia and other places have passed through, in consequence of his late visit, and his false, unscriptural doctrines. Many more sufferings, I believe, are in store for me, both in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York. Tell friends to pray for me that my faith may not fail in this day of shaking, of fearfulness, and dismay. Such a day as it is everywhere was never known among Friends on this continent. But the Lord has a seed, a precious seed; few in number, it is true, but I trust they will be kept steadfast in the Truth, and that ultimately his cause will arise and prosper.

After his return to the city he continues :—

Philadelphia, 4th mo. 13th.—On the 9th it was late and nearly dark before we reached the house of our ancient friend William Jackson, of London Grove. We went to their Monthly Meeting at New Garden, a pretty large gathering of Friends. In the meeting for discipline I was more engaged than at many other times. We dined at Enoch Lewis', an elder and a schoolmaster, and one that has the name of being a deep mathematician.

On Sixth-day we were at the Monthly Meeting at Fallowfield, where I was favoured with considerable openness and enlargement, both in feeling and ministry. We had a meeting at Doe-run on Seventh-day morning. I ventured on a little expression, which was more to my relief than I had hoped for.

Bradford meeting on First-day morning was large, and I was much engaged. Zechariah xi. 9—"He is just and having salvation"—was brought before me to my instruction and comfort, and I was concerned boldly to preach Christ Jesus our Lord as the Saviour of men.

I must only add a few lines, as I wish to go to Pine-street meeting, the meeting to which my dear and valued friends Jonathan and Hannah Evans belong; and though there is much of that dark and bitter spirit crept in among Friends there, yet there is no meeting in the city in which I have been sensible of greater power, and in which I have found more openness. Dear J. is truly a father to me: he is sound as a bell, and firm as a rock, a true believer in Christ, and one who shows forth his faith in life and conversation. His wife is a precious, tender-spirited woman; the more I am with them the more I discover of true enlargement on Christian grounds. These are fearful times. Send me papers and pamphlets about the slave-trade and West India slavery. Friends in America appear to be animated by hearing of the zeal of our dear friends in England on this subject of deep interest. How much better to be united in good works than disputing about the offices, and character, and person, of our blessed Redeemer!

The Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia was now at hand, and William Forster attended its various sittings. For some days during the course of it, and after its close, he was very unwell. The distressing state of things among Friends affected both body and mind. His strength was greatly reduced, and he was much tried by a muscular affection both of the throat and neck. In allusion to this he writes :—

At the North Meeting in Philadelphia, just before the Yearly Meeting, I totally lost my voice; and, after standing a while, unable to articulate a single word, I sat down, but rose again, and was enabled to finish without much further difficulty. At Pine-street, last First-day week, I was considerably tried; but, making several long halts in the course of my communication, which was not short, I got through, and I believe was pretty well understood. I went to Arch-street last First-day morning. I ventured to rise, and a large field of doctrine opened before me, principally on the circumstances of the early Christians and the peculiar excellency of the Christian dispensation; but I had not proceeded far before I felt considerable difficulty of utterance, yet, being much pressed in spirit, I endeavoured to do my best. I suppose there were not less than 1500 or 1800 persons in the house. The people were still, and there was, as several have acknowledged, rather an unusual solemnity over the meeting, so that I believe the substance of the communication was generally understood.

He was now looking forward to attending the approaching Yearly Meeting in New York, and a lengthened course of religious service beyond it. Under these circumstances it was a great comfort to him to have the prospect of the continued com-

panionship of the Friend who had already been so long his kind and efficient helper. In reference to this, he says:—

4th mo. 30th.—My dearly beloved, faithful, and brotherly friend John Paul opened to friends, at their Monthly Meeting yesterday, his apprehension of duty to continue with me during the remainder of my visit in America. I think there is hardly a man who, in these times, stands on fairer ground among Friends in Philadelphia.

Diligently pursuing his labours, as he passed along from meeting to meeting, he arrived at New York a few days before the opening of the Yearly Meeting.

5th mo. 23rd. New York.—I have felt a difficulty in conveying any adequate description of the present state of affairs to any that are strangers to persons, habits of thinking, and the ways and manners, and the general aspect of our Society in this land. In all such cases there is no safer ground than matter of fact; and though surmises and reports may seem to be well grounded, and one's own mind may be satisfied respecting them, yet they are not altogether what one would wish to send to others. But now almost every week something or other of a tangible nature is brought into view. Opinions are more unequivocally avowed, and the line of demarcation more strongly drawn. Indeed it is the apprehension of some friends of discernment, that the period cannot be very far distant in which every conspicuous member of the Society, in some of the Yearly Meetings, will be obliged to declare himself on one side or the other; either attached to the Society on its ancient Christian principles, or one with that revolutionizing and disorganising spirit which would very much lay waste the discipline, and introduce and establish the anti-christian notions of Socinianism, and a sort of spiritualized Deism. I have seen the storm approaching almost from the first of my coming to America, but I little expected to have stayed to have seen my apprehensions and anticipations so fully realised. I cannot entertain much doubt or fear as to

the ultimate issue of these convulsions. I have a strong hope that, after they have subsided, and friends are favoured with a little respite from suffering, the Society will be, more than has been the case for many years past, established in that faith which was delivered to the saints, and that the Lord Jesus will be more fully trusted in, and more openly acknowledged than heretofore in his glorious mediatorial character, and in all his various offices as a Leader and Commander to the people, their Shepherd and Bishop, the Captain of Salvation, and their hope of glory. But many and very deep will be the conflicts and tribulations of those who are preserved in faithfulness during this time of trial, and whose life may be preserved to witness this breaking forth of light and victory.

There are many, exerting their own will and wisdom in our religious Society, who are evidently no more one with Friends on subjects of the greatest importance connected with Christian doctrine than we are one with Antinomians and Unitarians. I am borne down, afflicted, and very sorrowful.

In the midst of these trials it was cheering to him to hear that his young friend Maria Middleton (afterwards the wife of Samuel Fox) had manifested her attachment to the cause of Christ, by speaking as a minister of the Gospel in our meetings.* In allusion to this he adds :—

I am comforted by dear Maria Middleton's dedication, and hope she will be strengthened to hold on her way. How different should I feel respecting any occurrences of that kind in the present state of things among Friends in America, unless I could be sure they were upon the true foundation. Serious young people are so generally carried off by these specious pretensions to a highly *simplified* simplicity and *spiritualized* spirituality.

26th.—The Yearly Meeting begins this morning. I expect to leave the city soon after it is over for the interior of this

* See her interesting Memoirs.

State and Upper Canada. Therefore think of me during the summer, beating about in the backwoods, and enduring the many trials, both of flesh and of spirit, inseparable from such a course of dedication. And pray for me, that I may be endued with fresh supplies of patience from day to day, and that if I can do no more for the honour of the cause, I may be enabled to walk unblameably before the people. My many dear friends in England are often brought near to me in the enjoyment of that fellowship which is in the Truth; and I cannot say how strong are the attractions by which I feel myself drawn to them, nor how earnestly I desire to return and dwell among them. I feel that they are my people, and (may I be allowed to say it?) that their God is my God.

The Yearly Meeting, as might be supposed, was a time of conflict and trial. In pursuance of the prospect indicated above, William Forster left the city soon after its conclusion, and entered upon his visit to the interior of the State, and in Upper Canada.

6th mo. 22nd. Rensellaerville, Albany Co., New York.—I have been sad in spirit, much east down, and sorely tried. The sorrows and fears, the temptations and discouragements of my present path are beyond all description. Until I left New York, and came up the river, and was fully given up to the service of this visit, I was often agitated, distressed, and perplexed. My heart is once more a little lifted up above the billows; and I have some feelings of peaceful trust that, though I may have to wade through deep waters to the end of my pilgrimage in this land, yet that I shall have to rejoice on the banks of deliverance. Elias Hicks plainly told me that, in consequence of introducing such subjects as the doctrine of Christ into my ministry, it had a scattering effect (I believe these were nearly his words), that it tended to disturb the solemnity of the meeting, and that, in consequence of such communications, I had blocked up my own way in

many places. These are serious charges. At first they had scarcely any effect upon me; yet in subsequent moments of weakness they have preyed upon my spirits more than they ought to have done. But, blessed be the name of our Redeemer, none of these things have been permitted to move me from the steadfastness of my faith. When I feel it laid upon me, I preach Christ and his salvation as strongly and decidedly as ever. And sometimes it has been to my humbling admiration, that I have been furnished on such occasions with arguments drawn from Scripture testimony, very clear and satisfactory to my own mind, on the subject of our Lord's eternal power and Godhead, and the many blessings conferred upon man by his sufferings and mediation; and though they may have but little effect, or none, to the confirming of others, yet they are blessed to my own comfort, and, I trust, to my preservation also. I am satisfied that those who take part with the disaffected in doctrine and discipline, are much the larger number in several of the Quarterly Meetings in Pennsylvania, Jersey, New York, and on Long Island. There is considerable weakness and unsettlement in many parts of this State. I am often ready to compare my present lot in America to David Sands' trials in Ireland.*

From the neighbourhood of Albany, N. Y., William Forster appears to have proceeded northwards, and to have entered Upper Canada on the east side of Lake Ontario, visiting all the Meetings of Friends in Canada West, and re-entering the State of New York by Buffalo. This journey occupied more than three months; but of the incidents and Christian labours connected with it very few particulars have

* See "Memoirs of David Sands." It will be recollected that during his lengthened religious visit in Europe, D. S. laboured much among Friends in Ireland, at a time rendered peculiarly memorable both by the "Rebellion," and the "Defection."

been preserved. The following extracts from letters to his wife relate to that period :—

Mount Pleasant, three miles west of Grand River, West County, 9th mo. 8th.—I trust it has been at times my humble, earnest petition to be delivered from my many fears; but I am sorry to say that I think I can perceive that this trying and very humiliating infirmity is rather on the increase; possibly it may be well that it is so. It leads me into deeper exercises, and induces me more deliberately to count the cost before I enter upon new and distant fields of labour. Previously to the receipt of thy very touching letter I had been cheered with a glimmering hope of return, such as I had not enjoyed for many months before: thou dost not know what it is to be shut up in the backwoods for hours together, and of course canst not conceive how enlivening it is to catch the first glimpse of the horizon breaking through the trees,—just so I have thought it was with me; and though I am not now in the enjoyment of the same liveliness of feeling with which I have been comforted within the last few weeks, yet I am still supported in hope that my liberation is not very distant; therefore, my love, let us lift up our hearts with gratitude and praise, and take fresh courage to trust in the tender mercies of the Lord, and strive, with greater degrees of devotion, to commit ourselves, and to commend one another, to his disposal and protection.

We are now on our way to the meeting in Norwich. In this part of Canada Friends are settled very much in the woods, so that we shall find considerable difficulty in getting along with our waggon; and probably we shall be obliged to leave it, and borrow a common country waggon, which will be likely to lengthen our journey a few days. We shall probably make an excursion to Yarmouth, a new meeting in Talbot-street, and take the meetings in Ancaster on our way to Niagara, and cross the river again at Black-rock; I have also the prospect of two or three meetings at places where there are no Friends. Friends are beginning to settle in Michigan, so that I think it will not be long before those

parts are visited. If we are allowed to return without going to these distant places, I hope we may be at liberty to leave Canada in about two weeks. I have thought it may be best for me to attempt meetings in a few of the large villages, principally on the high road, Canandaigua, Geneva, &c. I have had rather an uncommon feeling of interest for Friends in Scipio, and have thought it not improbable that I may feel it laid upon me to visit the families in Scipio and North-street; but that is very uncertain. From thence I think of proceeding by way of De-Ruyter to Smyrna, and a few other meetings in our way to Butternuts, &c., and then to Friendsville in Susquehannah County, Pennsylvania, and so to Stroudsburgh, Easton, a large town on the Delaware; and perhaps I may venture to the Moravian village of Bethlehem, and take a few other meetings in the way to Philadelphia.

Those who take an interest in tracing William Forster's movements in America, will know how to appreciate some of his prospective delineations; for, characteristic as they are of a comprehensive mind, always on the watch, they furnish, in some instances, almost the only indication left upon record respecting his course, during some of his long journeys in that vast country. He adds:—

Now, thou must try to feel with me, and mayst thou be drawn, in patient waiting before the Lord, to feel after the counsel of his wisdom, whether it may be best for me to proceed immediately into Carolina, or to stay in Pennsylvania and Jersey during the winter, and finish off in those parts, going through New York to Rhode Island, so as to visit Nantucket, and the other meetings I have not attended, previously to this Yearly Meeting; and who knows but I may then be at liberty to return home without visiting the Southern States? Indeed, so very earnest is my desire for at least a respite from labour, and to be once more with thee, that, hard as it is to me to think of ever being required again to cross

the ocean, I believe I should be given up to it in prospect, rather than endure the trial of another winter in this land; but if thou canst not be easy without encouraging my going to the southward, I fully believe that I might accomplish the journey so as to return to the Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia in 1825, and perhaps reach London before ours concludes. I trust that I am now fully at liberty to tell thee that I hope that, in the condescending kindness of the Lord, I am released from my prospect of visiting the West Indies. I believe the exercise has been profitable to me, and I hope no harm will arise from its having been brought so prominently into view. My gracious Lord and Master knows why I have been baptized into this depth of feeling, and why I have waded for many years through so much exercise for the various classes of the inhabitants of those islands. The future is hidden from me. If He is pleased to lengthen out my days, and send me in more advanced life, thou must help me to be obedient to the call. Since the subject of slavery has been brought so conspicuously into notice, I have felt much more of a peaceful acquittal than at any time previously. Thou wilt believe that it is much of a comfort and pleasure to make this communication. I do it with fear; for I know that He who has taken away the burden for a season can lay it upon me again whenever He sees meet.

St. John's Tavern, Ancaster Village.—Here we are after our long travels in the wilderness, not a little rejoiced that we have got through the swamps and thickets, and that in good earnest we are setting our faces towards Buffalo and Niagara. Friends are so widely scattered over this province, that to visit all the meetings is really a great undertaking. John Paul has just been running over his account, and tells me that since we crossed the Niagara river we have travelled 1152 miles. We have passed through a large district of rich, fertile country, capable of supporting a very dense population: in some parts the roads are really good, but there is much tedious and very laborious travelling in the newly-settled districts. I do not know that I can accuse myself of any willing omission of duty; yet had I sought after a more entire daily

dedication, I think it more than probable that in some instances my way would have opened into more extensive service. But I am prone to sink into discouragement, and, though it is now more than twenty years since I first professed myself a minister of Christ, yet every kind of religious service seems more than ever formidable in my view; and I never remember to have felt myself more in need of that encouragement and support which was often rendered helpful to me in earlier days. We were with Friends at Ancaster yesterday, and this morning were at a meeting with the Mohawk Indians on the Grand River. I have now been at all the meetings of Friends in Canada; and, though I have gone through much, to accomplish this labour of love,—early and late, and sometimes under real suffering both from heat and fatigue; yet, in looking over the visit, I can hardly persuade myself that anybody is really the better for all that I have endured. I go along under a deep and almost abiding sense of my great unprofitableness.

I do not want to hear of eloquent, flowery, popular preachers; but that Friends are growing in the life of religion, deep and weighty in spirit, retired from the world, united one to the other in the love of Christ, and abounding in the graces of the Gospel.

Having again entered the State of New York, he writes to his wife of their dear friend Priscilla Gurney:—

Near Pembroke, Genesee Co., New York, 10th mo. 2nd.—Her memory is precious, and the assurance granted us that she is entered into the joy of her Lord is most comforting. I have lately had many sweet remembrances of her. I have thought much of her redeemed and purified state whilst in the body; and strong is the sense I have had of her purified and glorified state in the kingdom and presence of her Lord and Saviour, as one added to the cloud of witnesses by which I see myself encompassed,—of the certainty of the blessedness of those

who die in the Lord,—and of that fulness of joy and peace which is in reserve for those who retain their faith and love unshaken to the end. She was one in whom the graces of the Christian character were eminently conspicuous. I think I never saw greater loveliness in religion than she exhibited in her brightest and most cheerful moments; and, even when sad and mournful, there was such an evident sense of her deep interest in Christ that we could scarcely mourn with her.

In allusion to the influence of unsound opinions, he remarks:—

It is indeed a day of treading down, of sorrow and dismay! But, blessed be the Lord, He will never forsake his own cause. It is to me most deeply in the way of the cross to go again into that part of the country; but if it should appear the path of duty, I hope to be given up in resignation to the disposal of our great Lord and Master. Dear Robert Fowler's few words, in the message he sent me, were peculiarly comforting to me. I thought them remarkably full of that unction which constitutes the life of true ministry. I have often had, with reverent gratitude, to admire the excellency of that gift with which it has pleased the Lord to intrust him.

We did not leave Buffalo early this morning. It has been a warm, pleasant day. This month and part of the next is, to my taste, the finest weather in America; it is generally clear and calm; and the variety of tints in the foliage of the woods, from the brightest red to a light yellow mixed with every shade of green, gives the country a beautiful appearance. We are not much short of 400 miles from New York, in what was a few years ago a complete wilderness; and I think there was as much travelling on the road to-day as I have often seen on our high turnpike roads 100 miles from London. In the course of about twenty miles I think we did not meet less than twelve or fifteen waggons of movers, most of them pretty well filled,—beds, bedding, wife, children, pots, pans, and spinning wheels,—on their way to Ohio. It

is the road from Vermont and New England to the Western States, and the former furnish a large proportion of the most respectable settlers in the new countries. The people generally wear the appearance of comfort and light-heartedness; their horses look well, and in some instances their waggons were drawn by fine fat oxen.

On reaching Scipio, William Forster, as he had anticipated, believed it to be his duty to visit Friends in their families. Near the conclusion of the service he writes:—

Venice, Cayuga Co., 10th mo. 27th.—We have very nearly finished our visit to the families of Friends in Scipio and North-street meetings. I believe I have endeavoured to be faithful; but how far the witness was reached in the hearts of those for whom I was exercised I cannot say. I suppose we have made nearly 100 visits, and having to go to most of the houses in our waggon, it has kept us pretty fully employed from morning till night. At an appointed meeting at Salmon-creek to-day, I felt more of the power of Truth than is often permitted me. A meeting is appointed to-morrow for a few families of Friends who do not hold any meeting, at Estridge, three miles from this place; and for the people of Andover, a handsome village on the eastern shore of Lake Cayuga, for the evening. It is to be held in Susannah Marriott's school-room. We propose to cross the lake on Fourth or Fifth-day for Hector; and we shall probably come round by Ithaca, at the southern extremity of the lake, to Auburn. From thence I believe I must make an attempt for a meeting at Montezuma, a place remote from Friends; and I think I have the same feeling for the people of Skaneateles village. We shall then take our leave of this neighbourhood and proceed to the eastward, perhaps pretty direct to Albany; for I think I hardly dare to turn away from that neighbourhood after all I have felt respecting it, though it seems a great undertaking to hold meetings in those large towns.

Though much absorbed in his many arduous engagements, the subject of slavery continued to interest him very deeply; and in reference to it he remarks:—

I think it is most important, that people in the slave-holding States should be stirred up to greater feeling on this most crying evil, slavery. I have finished reading the pamphlet sent me, entitled "Negro Slavery." It has harrowed up my feelings. It is most truly distressing to read of so much human suffering, and to feel how very little we can do towards its alleviation. But how great is the comfort that we are permitted to pray; and we know, blessed be the Lord that we do know it!—that in prayer there is both relief and support.

12th mo. 3rd.—When I apprehend myself called to labour in the ministry of the gospel, I often find strength boldly to preach the Lord Jesus and his salvation, and decidedly to avow my belief in his eternal divinity and omnipotence; and sometimes it is given me, in much tenderness of spirit, to plead with Friends, that in the day of visitation they avail themselves of the privileges purchased for man by the propitiatory offering of the dear Son of God. I fancy I can sometimes perceive that my plain Scripture doctrine of repentance and faith, and submission and obedience, is anything but acceptable.

We were at the Monthly Meeting at Butternuts to-day, a sort of clearing-out time; and I am not void of hope that I shall be favoured, after all my many trials, to leave this State for the present with a peaceful mind.

12th mo. 29th. Charlestown, Chester Co., Pennsylvania.—Sixth and Seventh-days were spent in travelling down the east branch of the Susquehannah to the Great Bend, where we crossed the river on a bridge, and then, leaving the valley, had a rough hilly road most of the way to Montrose, and stopped for the night at a poor tavern not far on the other side of that town. We were stirring early in the morning, and reached Friendsville about half-an-hour before meeting.

It was far from a small meeting, and the more interesting to me as being at the least one-half composed of Friends from England and Ireland, with whom or their near connexions I was acquainted. The heart-tendering power and love of Christ so far prevailed among us, that I could not but hope that some of the careless and the transgressors were awakened to a little feeling; and I trust the tried and mournful ones were comforted in the Lord. After considerable deliberation I thought it safest for us to hold a meeting at Montrose, which was appointed in the Court-house, a commodious building, and attended, as was supposed, by nearly the whole of the adult population. The town is of recent establishment, and there is no place of worship. I was enabled so to preach Christ and his salvation, as to feel peace and comfort in the retrospect.

On the 9th we had a hilly and very cold day's journey of thirty-three miles, most of the way through a very thinly inhabited country. On the 10th we had another full day's journey of thirty-one miles. Our road, like the day preceding, was most of the way through a very dreary, comfortless country. We reached Stroudsburgh next day, and found a hospitable and truly comfortable home at the house of our worthy friend Daniel Stroud; and on the 12th, had a meeting with Friends and many of their neighbours. The snow being increased so as to make good sleighing, accompanied by our kind host in his sleigh, we had a pleasant journey of forty miles to Mauk Chunk, a small settlement of Friends recently formed no the Lehigh river. The meeting was to my satisfaction and encouragement.

On the 15th we had some remarkably fine picturesque scenery on the way to Oxford, in New Jersey; passing through the Blue Mountains at the Watergap on the banks of the Delaware, it was equal to anything I have seen in America. The river was frozen over in several places, but we had no difficulty in crossing it. We were kindly welcomed by our friend, Tacy Robison, an agreeable, valuable woman, living very remote from Friends. We were entertained in a style of warm and generous hospitality.

We came next day to Easton, on the Delaware, and that evening had a large meeting in the Court-house; it is a considerable town, the inhabitants mostly of German descent. The meeting was very formidable in prospect; but, in conclusion, though my preaching had not been with excellency of speech or of wisdom, I was thankful in believing that the testimony of truth had not suffered. Next morning we came on to Bethlehem, a considerable village belonging to the Moravians, beautifully situated in the valley of the Lehigh. I wished to have had a meeting at the place. I think they would have made way for it had they not had a meeting appointed that evening. Next day in the afternoon attended a meeting appointed for Friends, at Richland. It was large; my way was opened into some religious service, and I was enabled to bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.

We came on Seventh-day evening to near Gwynedd. The meeting was large, in their handsome new stone meeting-house just finished. I felt myself standing on very tender ground; but, through Divine mercy and help, I was enabled to rise above the fear of man, and in much plainness of speech to preach Christ and his salvation.

12th mo. 22nd. Philadelphia.—Jonathan and Hannah Evans came to see me. I very sensibly felt the kindness of their early attention. They are my very dear and faithful friends; indeed there are none from whom I have received more warm expressions of sympathy and love than from their family.

On Third-day I was at the Monthly Meeting for the northern district. It was, to my apprehension, a low time. I went to dinner with my cousins Hodgson; it was interesting to me being there. In the evening called on my dear and valued friend, Samuel Bettle.

On Fourth-day, went to the meeting in Twelfth-street, and was strengthened to labour in ministry almost to my own admiration. I called on my dear friend Thomas Wistar, an elder in good repute, from whom I have received much kindness; and went to see dear Hannah Eliot, a precious, heavenly-minded woman, sinking gradually away in a consumption. I was thankful for the opportunity, and hope I

shall long remember it. Stephen Grellet came to town, and was very affectionate to me. I believe there is no path of safety for me, but simply, honestly, and unequivocally to avow the truths of the gospel of Christ whenever I apprehend it to be laid upon me, and, by watching unto prayer, to seek to be preserved in meekness and love.

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